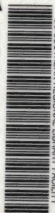


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# HISTORY

AND EARLY PROGRESS

OF CHRISTIANITY.

BY

THE REV. SAMUEL BENDS, M.A.

OF THE

UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD.

LONDON: PRINTED BY J. JOHNSON, ST. PAUL'S CHURCH-YARD.

1790.

1790.

LONDON.

PRINTED BY J. JOHNSON, ST. PAUL'S CHURCH-YARD.

AND SOLD BY ALL BOOKSELLERS AND STATIONERS.

AND BY THE AUTHOR, AT HIS HOUSE, NO. 17, ST. MARK'S LANE.

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THE  
HISTORY

OF THE

RISE AND EARLY PROGRESS

OF

CHRISTIANITY,

COMPRISING

AN INQUIRY INTO ITS TRUE CHARACTER AND DESIGN.

---

BY THE

REV. SAMUEL HINDS, M. A.

OF QUEEN'S COLLEGE, AND VICE-PRINCIPAL OF ST. ALBAN'S HALL,  
OXFORD.

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VOL. I.

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LONDON:

PRINTED FOR BALDWIN AND CRADOCK;

C. AND J. RIVINGTON; J. DUNCAN; E. HODGSON; SUTTABY, FOX, AND  
SUTTABY; B. FELLOWES; J. DOWDING; H. T. HODGSON; LAYCOCK  
AND SON; G. LAWFORD; AND J. FRASER:

ALSO FOR J. PARKER, OXFORD: AND J. AND J. DEIGHTON, CAMBRIDGE.

1828.





TO THE MOST REVEREND

**WILLIAM,**

*LORD ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY.*

---

MY LORD,

IT seems very natural that a member of the Church of England, writing on Church history, should seek to procure notice for his book, by connecting it in any way with your Grace's name. But, whatever the influence of this motive may be supposed generally to be, in the present instance it is certainly neither the sole nor the principal one.

From your Grace's hands I received my ordination as the Church's minister; it was your Grace who called me to the most animating service of the Church—that of a Missionary; and a continuance of your countenance made me Principal of Coddington College. In the midst of many dark days which have since passed over me, I have experienced one especial blessing, and am desirous of recording thus publicly my thankfulness for it;—it is, that I have been enabled to devote the comparative leisure which ill health has forced on me to some inquiries of the deepest interest; and, in publishing the result of these, have been permitted still to enjoy the

same kind patronage by which the more active employment of my former life was encouraged and promoted.

To this simple avowal I should be sorry to add a single sentence, which might awaken an association with the language of mere complimentary dedication : and praise indeed, bestowed by an obscure individual, on one of your Grace's exalted station and long tried character, would probably be thought needless, if not intrusive. But I owe it to myself to apprise my readers, that in wholly abstaining from the expression of such sentiments, as they must expect me to feel, and as they know your



Grace to merit, I am acting in compliance with an express prohibition.

I am,

MY LORD,


Your Grace's obliged

and obedient Servant,

SAMUEL HINDS.

*Oxford, Oct. 18, 1828.*

## PREFACE.



MANY of my readers may require to be informed, that the chief part of the substance of the following work has already appeared in the *ENCYCLOPÆDIA METROPOLITANA*, and forms the first portion of its *Ecclesiastical History*. Being in itself however an entire work, it has been published apart, with a view of soliciting more attention to the period of Christianity which it embraces, than is usually bestowed on it.

It is indeed a matter both of regret and of wonder, that in an age and country, distinguished for a diffusion of knowledge, and for a spirit of universal inquiry, there should be any need, on so important and interesting a subject, of a publication pretending principally to awaken inquiry. But it cannot be denied, that *Ecclesiastical History* has

not found the same favour with the great mass of students and general readers, as other branches of knowledge, compared with which its claims are equal or superior. As an ordinary acquirement, the attempt would be formidable, and might be unnecessary, to grasp at eighteen centuries of detail such as the Church's annals present; nor are all portions by any means of equal importance. But there is one period with which no educated Christian should be unacquainted, or even imperfectly acquainted; because, on the true representation of it, depends much of the character which he asserts for his Church, of whatever denomination it may be. It is, the period which is comprised in the gradual Rise of Christianity during the ministry of Christ and his inspired followers; and its condition when first left to the fallible conduct of uninspired men.

It may be requisite to state distinctly, that in taking a survey of this interesting period, I have not contemplated the support of any particular theory or doctrine; it has been done without the slightest reference to sect or party. In saying this, I by no means



wish to cast an indirect censure on those whose labours have been, so often worthily, directed to these objects ; but to state simply, that mine has been wholly distinct. It has been, historical truth, pursued for its own sake. I have read, and written, without considering in a single instance how far any theological or ecclesiastical system, controverted or established, would oppose or sanction my conclusions ; and if at the close of my researches I find myself confirmed in my adherence to the Church of England, I have the satisfaction of feeling the more assured, that I am attached to that Church because of its doctrines and practices, and not, to its doctrines and practices, because they characterize the Church into which it was my lot to be baptized. I shall be happy if I shall have been the means of inspiring others with the same feeling ; but this was not my primary object. Nor will the more learned and accomplished Churchman, who needs not such assistance as is here offered, be disposed, if he considers the case of the great majority, to regard my labours as needless.

It will not of course be supposed, that in investigating a subject so full in many respects of doubt and difficulty, I have depended solely on my own original inquiries. To the researches of former writers, both living and dead, I owe much; as the continual references to both will indicate. To some few my obligations are so great as to require a more especial acknowledgment.

In the introductory view of the religion of the Gentiles, I have derived great assistance from Brucker's *Historia Critica Philosophiæ*. Warburton's *Divine Legation of Moses* is another work which has been greatly serviceable to me in this part of my inquiry; but still more in my estimate of the state of religion among the Jews previous to the Messiah's Advent, and in some parts of my view of Christ's Ministry. It is hardly possible indeed for any but one well-read in Warburton's works, to understand how much I am indebted to that great and eccentric genius; and not the less where I have differed from him in the conclusions to which his statements and reasonings lead him. It is a characteristic of the man, that,

like a whimsical self-confident tactician, who throws into subordinate stations his ablest commanders, he disposes of his most important views as episodes and incidental diatribes; or makes them otherwise subservient to some one less important. His works will probably on this account long furnish the prominent and leading principles to inquiries which might seem hardly connected with the primary objects of Warburton's researches, and which are even more important than these were.

In the next portion of my inquiry, which embraces the state of Christianity during the ministry of apostles and inspired men, Lord Barrington's *Miscellanea Sacra* has suggested to me the arrangement of periods and some other valuable matter. Mosheim's best work, *De Rebus Christianorum ante Constantinum Magnum*, has been also of great use to me here. As a sole and ultimate guide, Mosheim is liable to serious objections; but in his own proper province he is incomparable. No ecclesiastical writer was ever so well-read in all the secondary sources of information; and no one ever

understood better how to apply skilfully, the result of another's labours. This very talent however caused, or was connected with, not merely a neglect of original materials, but a turn of mind which disqualified him for making the same adroit use of them. He excelled in correcting and finishing off the work of others; in this department his judgment was acute and his execution masterly: but he was so long and extensively engaged in this kind of employment, that he was the less fitted to contend with any rude and misshapen materials, before they had received some form from another. Certainly he has most failed in those parts where the nature of the subject has apparently most tempted him to fashion the whole view himself, instead of remodelling the theories of others; in his account, for instance, of the constitution of the primitive and apostolic Church, especially of the episcopacy, and of the authority of the Church assemblies.

The constitution and government of the apostolical Church, and of the Church in the period immediately succeeding, is the point on which I have had least reason to

be satisfied, not with Mosheim alone, but with the other authors on the subject from whom I have sought guidance and help. Of all inquiries, no one has been more obscured by prejudice and party-spirit. Lord King, indeed, wrote his once celebrated Inquiry<sup>a</sup> in an honest and candid spirit, as the result testifies; but his research was partial, and led him to adopt the congregational principle of the Independents. In Mr. Sclater's reply<sup>b</sup>, principles scarcely less erroneous may be pointed out; yet, as far as the controversy went, he was right; and his opponent, by an act of candour perhaps unexampled, acknowledged himself convinced, and gave Sclater preferment for his victory.

The errors of a writer, at once sincere and ingenious, can hardly be so predominant

<sup>a</sup> An Enquiry in the Constitution, Discipline, Unity, and Worship of the Primitive Church. By an Impartial Hand.

<sup>b</sup> An Original Draught of the Primitive Church, in answer to a Discourse, entitled, An Enquiry, &c. By a Presbyterian of the Church of England.



as to make his speculations wholly useless ; and to Mosheim, at least, I have nevertheless been greatly indebted, not only in the above-mentioned portion of my work, but during my progress through the last stage of my inquiry,—the state of Christianity under its first uninspired teachers. The book, however, which has been here most serviceable, although in a way peculiar to itself, is Bingham's Ecclesiastical Antiquities. Although little more than an index, it is a full and faithful one, of the various information to be collected on the rites, constitution, and government of the early Church ; and this very circumstance, while it renders it less attractive to the mere reader, increases its utility to the inquirer. Such a work is, after all, likely to be more permanently valuable to Ecclesiastical History, than those researches which have been blended with the speculations of the philosopher, the controversialist, or the historian. The very clothing which gives to these their present popularity, is liable to offend the shifting taste and temper of a succeeding age ; and, even in their own generation, they are generally less fitted for facilitating the independent

inquiries of those, who would think and judge for themselves. A mere historical directory, such as Bingham's *Antiquities of the Church*, may be compared to an accurate model designed for an anatomy school; in history, and discussion, the natural structure is disguised, as in a well-dressed portrait; and thus, what gives grace and beauty to the historical picture, destroys its use, as a source of knowledge, and as an instrument of study.

These works have been specified, because they have most intimately affected the plan of my own, and the principles adopted in it; or have furnished, or else directed me to, the materials. But there are many other sources from which I have derived assistance. It is, for instance, to Lord King's *Critical History*, that I owe my most valuable remarks on the Apostles' Creed.

There is also one who although not occupying any ground exactly similar to my own, has really contributed more than any whom I have named. Those who are acquainted with Dr. Whately's publications,

especially his Essays, will on perusing the following pages, readily perceive that it is to him I allude: and yet I have derived far more from his long and familiar intercourse, than from his books. My use of his publications, however, is all with which the public is concerned, because to these only they can be referred; his other assistance is a private and personal favour, the character and extent of which, it would be impertinent, and indeed impossible, to state.

In all instances, it has been my endeavour, by accurate reference, to give my reader the means of ascertaining for himself the facts asserted, and of examining for himself the opinions canvassed. Still, with my utmost care, I can hardly expect to have escaped all omissions or mistakes. The references, especially to original authorities, having been made at different times, the same edition of an author was not always accessible; and generally I have been obliged to content myself with obtaining any, instead of selecting the best. To obviate the inconvenience arising from this, I have given for the most part the references in a form

not accommodated to any particular edition; or when the page alone was the distinguishing mark, I have specified the edition employed. The instances in which I have omitted to do this are in my references to Epiphanius, which are made to Petavius's edition, republished at Cologne in 1682; in those to Justin Martyr, made to the Paris edition of 1636; and in those to Irenæus, the folio of Grabe, Oxon. 1702, being the book employed.



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## INTRODUCTION.

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**HISTORY** being the portraiture of mankind, (a subject which admits of two very different aspects,) itself obtains a corresponding difference in its design and character. It may represent men merely as inhabitants of this world—considered in their relation to one another, as members of families, cities, and empires. Or, again, it may represent them in their relation to an invisible state of things, and to the supreme invisible Being. Whichever of these views we contemplate in this great picture of time, the most striking feature, doubtless, is the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ upon earth. For, considered merely in its results on the temporal condition of mankind, neither conquest, legislation, nor philosophy, has at any period affected society so intimately, so extensively, and so permanently, as Christianity; whilst all that concerns our heavenly connections, seems important, chiefly in proportion as it has been subservient to, or otherwise connected with, this institution. With the former of these views the present inquiry is not concerned; it is directed to the rise and progress of Chris-

tianity, considered only so far as it has affected the relation and intercourse between God and men.

And in order to estimate the nature and extent of that change, which the Saviour's coming has wrought on the religious condition of mankind, as well as the fitness of the means employed for effecting it, it will be first necessary to take a brief survey of the state in which he found religion. It is well known, that, for many centuries preceding the Advent, all the world, except the Jews, a small and otherwise inconsiderable people, were not only in the grossest error on the subject, but without any authentic source to supply them with more correct information. An account therefore of the religion of the Gentiles (as all other nations were termed in distinction from the one favoured people of God) will be rather an account of their *ignorance* than of their *knowledge*. But however widely removed from truth are the opinions and practices which such an account must contain, it will serve the twofold purpose, of instructing us in the sources of that ignorance, and of discovering the propriety of the Christian scheme, wherein truth was so dispensed, as to apply specially to the more important varieties of existing error.

Proceeding from the religion of the Gentiles to that of the Jews, the need of the Gospel dispensation will appear not less in the state of their knowledge, than in that of the heathen ignorance. It was knowledge insufficient not only in quantity

but in kind ; partial, not because confined to a few truths, but because the truths which it embraced were each designedly incomplete, and requiring some afterpiece of revelation to render it intelligible and effective.

Besides the religion of the Gentiles and of the Jews, that of the Samaritans (narrow as was its extent and influence) will deserve some slight separate notice, owing to certain peculiarities in its origin and character, which distinguish it from the Jewish on the one hand, and still more from all the heathen creeds and modes of worship on the other.

## I. RELIGION OF THE GENTILES.

WERE history silent, the concurrent traditions and fables of all nations concerning a chaos, a deluge, and a repeopling of the earth from a single family, would suggest the inference, that out of one origin proceeded the religions of all the Gentile world. But this conclusion is more directly deduced from the Bible. At the dispersion of mankind after the attempt to build Babel<sup>a</sup>, the wan-

<sup>a</sup> The building of Babel forms the first great era in the history of idolatry. The work is described in the Bible, literally, as "a tower whose top was to the heavens," and the confusion as a confusion of "lip." Herodotus mentions the existence of such a building at Babylon in his time, (lib. i. c. 181.) and states that



derers we know possessed a certain portion of revelation, which they must have carried with them into their respective settlements; nor is it reasonable to suppose that this knowledge, however it might be neglected, would be soon altogether effaced. Limited as the compass of sacred history becomes from that period, still it affords instances amongst the heathen of priests and worshippers of

it was dedicated to the Assyrian Jupiter. Diodorus Siculus (lib. ii.) gives nearly the same account of it. Now, comparing these statements—the heathen with the sacred—we are perhaps warranted in interpreting the latter, as descriptive of a tower whose top was dedicated to the heavens as to an object of idolatrous worship, Jupiter being well understood by all to be the air or the heavens. (See Prideaux's *Connection*, vol. i. part i. book ii. ann. 570.)

It is more agreeable to this view, to understand by the confusion of lip, a disagreement in worship rather than in speech. A miraculous confusion of tongues is certainly not what we should suppose likely, from the strong marks which the several ancient languages retain of a common original, and of their difference being the gradual result of the dispersion. But a disturbance of the uniformity of worship is highly probable, considered as the means employed by Providence, to prevent the contemplated establishment of one great idolatrous Church and Empire in that early period. See Parkhurst's *Hebrew Lexicon*, under the word שֹׁפָר, Vitringæ *Observ. Sacr.* l. i. c. 9. and *Fragments to Calmet's Dict.* No. 265.

It was, doubtless, in reference to the heavens being the first and chief object of idolatry among the ancients, that the holy Scriptures open with the declaration, "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth;" thus claiming for Jehovah, (what none of the heathen ever ascribed to their deities,) the creation of the world, and including in the work of creation all that men called gods.

Jehovah. Such was Job, such was Melchisedech, such, possibly, I may add, was Potiphera the Egyptian, whose daughter Joseph married, as well as Jethro the father-in-law of Moses. In Balaam we recognize not only a believer, but one divinely inspired.

Without denying then the tendency or the capacity of mankind to create a system of religion for themselves, it may be fairly assumed that no period has yet occurred, which has afforded an opportunity for the experiment. Certainly the ancient heathen creeds could not have been originally the mere invention of fancy, or the independent deductions of reason, but rather the corruption of revealed religion—extending, it may be, in most instances, so far, that in process of time the foundation should be concealed and buried under the superstructure. Nevertheless, any attempt to trace the origin and progress of false religion, or any estimate of its character, which should have no reference to its connection with the true, would be as unreasonable as an inquiry into the formation of language, which should neglect all consideration of a portion of it being coexistent with the gift of speech.

Reasoning from the scriptural account of the several lapses of the Israelites into heathenish worship, it would seem that polytheism did not originally imply a disbelief in the unity of God ; neither were the objects of false worship originally

substituted for, or associated with, Jehovah. In short, they were not regarded as possessing a similar nature with his. Thus, when the people, despairing of the return of Moses from mount Sinai, persuaded Aaron to make them gods, both the occasion and the motive assigned plainly indicate, that the object represented by the golden calf was not intended as a substitute for the Lord, but for Moses ; not a God, in the same meaning of the term as when it was applied to Jehovah, but one of his ministering creatures, of a different order indeed, but in this respect supposed to be such as by divine appointment "the man Moses" had been unto them. "Up," (said they to Aaron,) "make us gods which shall go before us ; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what is become of him." And accordingly when the image was made, and the altar was built before it, still the proclamation was, "To-morrow there is a feast unto the Lord," meaning Jehovah<sup>b</sup>.

That the Israelites then did not consider polytheism as implying a disbelief in the unity of God will hardly be denied. That the heathen originally adopted it under the same impression is also highly probable. But what, it may be asked, could have suggested to the early world, possessing as they did the knowledge and belief that God is one, a system

<sup>b</sup> Exodus xxxii. 5. In the original it is "Jehovah."

so strange, and apparently incongruous, as polytheism? Was it the mere wantonness of fancy? or was there any doctrine of revelation known to all, and thus liable to become perverted by all? Such a doctrine there is. A belief in angels and ministering spirits appears in the earliest records of God's dispensations; nor can there be any difficulty in fixing on this article of belief as the point from which religion first began to diverge into error, and superstition, and impiety. Men, for instance, attributing whatever blessings they received from God to the intermediate agency of his good angels, would (if neglectful of the appointed preservatives against error) fall into an undue regard and reverence for these ministers of good. A kindly season, the rains which caused their corn to grow, the sun which ripened it, would become associated in their effects with some invisible superintendent, the agent and the creature of God. Hence the worship of the heavenly bodies, and of the various parts and operations of nature. In like manner, whatever great public benefactors arose, these would be supposed to be under the guidance of guardian angels, either attached to the individuals, or to the society for whose welfare they laboured. The reverence and gratitude felt towards the men, would lead to a veneration and worship of their supposed invisible guides. In time, the two would be confounded together, and the human being and the

guiding angel would be handed down in history and fable as one and the same person. By a similar abuse of Revelation, the doctrine of evil spirits would lead to a new class of gods, such as the Persian Ahriman and the Grecian Furies, whose malicious disposition would require sacrifice and worship, in order to avert their spleen. The robbers, tyrants, and mighty "hunters" of the earth, would be blended in traditionary lore with these, in like manner as the benefactors of mankind were with good angels.

Idolatry would be the necessary and early result of these indistinct notions. An image, originally that of a man, (for to sensible objects only would images be originally applied,) would, in process of time, be transferred to the tutelary spirit whose character was blended with his; and to the deity, so represented, rites would be instituted, consisting partly of the sepulchral honours paid to the man, and partly of such as were appropriated to the tutelary spirit. In the former we may discern the origin of the impurities and immorality of heathen worship; in the latter its impiety. Rites commemorative of human benefactors, naturally contained some reference to those habits of life, to which when living they had been most addicted. Hence, even in the memorials of the wise and brave, the warrior's grave would be stained with the blood of human victims; whilst the frailties and infirmities of the



sage and legislator, would be preserved in Bacchanalian revels, or in the filthy and disgusting emblems of the Phallics.

Nor was this motley adoration addressed to men alone. Whatever was admirable or useful in the whole compass of nature, (it being once assumed that its effects on mankind depended on the exercise of a power delegated to one of the host of heaven,) became invested with similar associations, and was adopted as symbolical of these unseen stewards of Providence. This was most remarkably the case in Egypt, where beasts, birds, reptiles, and plants became instruments of idolatry, and the works of nature were made to answer the purpose of graven images and other artificial symbols. With the Egyptians, too, the use of hieroglyphic characters cooperated to produce the same effect. The ox, for instance, was an obvious symbol of husbandry; and an ox, distinguished by colour or by any other arbitrary sign, of him who was their first or chief instructor in agriculture. When ceremonies and sacrifices were appropriated to this public benefactor, and his human character had been lost or blended with that of a tutelary spirit, the hieroglyphic figure under which he had been recorded in this monumental history, would suggest in the living animal a still more appropriate and vivid emblem. Thus the ox would become to the Egyptian idolater, what the work of Phidias or Praxiteles was to the Greek. Then a further pro-



cess of association would produce further results<sup>c</sup>. The deity would in time be believed to be mysteriously combined with the animal<sup>d</sup>; and thus the same principle, which led at Athens to the banishment of him who was hardy enough to assert that the statue of Minerva was but a block of dull marble<sup>e</sup>, made it sacrilege in Egypt to slay a cat or a stork.

To advert once more to the case of the Israelites. The methods adopted by Divine wisdom in the Mosaic dispensation to preserve them from false worship, are highly illustrative of this view of its origin and early nature. That they might have the less temptation and pretext for worshipping any of the host of heaven, Jehovah condescended to become to them God in both senses of the term; not only as the one, distinct, supreme, uncreated Being, but also as the tutelary Power presiding over their nation. “I am the Lord, *thy God*, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt,” is a declaration, which, considered together with the errors into which

<sup>c</sup> See Appendix, [A.]

<sup>d</sup> Herodotus, lib. ii. cap. 65. represents the Egyptians as *ἐνχομένοι τῷ θεῷ τοῦ ἄν ἢ τὸ θεῖον*, which indicates that their worship was not addressed to the brute, but to the deity with which it was supposed to be possessed.

<sup>e</sup> The name of this unfortunate free-thinker was Stilpo. (See Diog. Laert. l. ii. sect. 116.) A similar fate befel Anaxagoras, the first who is said to have taught them the doctrine of one supreme Being. He was condemned to die for calling their Apollo (or the Sun) a mass of burning matter. Ibid. sect. 12.

they so soon fell after their departure from Egypt, may be fairly interpreted as indicating, that in his dispensation to them he employed no ministering spirit. With the same view, it would seem, that the remonstrance was made against their desire to have a king<sup>e</sup>, inasmuch as without a king they were likely to look more *immediately* to Jehovah as their governor, and guide, and judge. In several other peculiarities of their polity as directed by God, we may trace the same merciful<sup>f</sup> intent to remove from them a temptation which proved so fatal to all the nations of the world: in none more, than in the exclusion from their view of a state of future rewards and punishments, whereby their attention was fixed and limited to that portion of his dispensation, which, with a more comprehensive revelation, they might have rashly deemed the less worthy of him, and likely to be delegated to angels or to men. Nor was it until the original character of idolatry, as practised by the nations around them, was changed and lost, that their prophets were commissioned to point to a better country than Canaan, and a worse bondage than that of Egypt or Assyria.

To this state of change and utter depravation the Gentile religion rapidly advanced. The worship of

<sup>e</sup> 1 Samuel viii.

<sup>f</sup> i. e. merciful to mankind at large; for it should be borne in mind, that God's favour to his chosen people, was shewn with a view to preserve religion, not for them exclusively, but for all the world.

God being once transferred to his creatures, henceforth religion became liable to all the accidents and modifications of a mere human institution. Its claim to a holier name and a higher authority was admitted as a matter of courtesy, but proofs and title-deeds were lost. To the inquiring mind all was foolishness and fable, to the vulgar it was only custom. And thus it was handed down from one generation to another, sometimes the toy of fancy, sometimes the engine of state policy; or, if the serious regard of any were arrested by it, as by an ancient monument of unearthly record, the characters on it were so worn, through time, neglect, and outrage, that all attempt to decipher them was fruitless, and all reasoning on their import conjectural.

It is scarcely necessary to observe, that the progress of false religion through its various shapes was not the same among the several Gentile nations. It has been questioned, for instance, whether the Persians ever proceeded to image-worship, and it has been also asserted that the Scythians never did. Among the Celtic nations, undoubtedly, (and they were probably of the same faith originally, as they were of the same stock with these latter,) idolatrous figures were first introduced by their Roman invaders<sup>g</sup>. Egypt, on the other hand, luxu-

<sup>g</sup> Tacitus (*De Moribus Germ.* c. 9.) represents the Germans as worshipping originally *secretum illud quod sola reverentia vident*. See also Cæsar, lib. vi. c. 20.

riated in all the refinement and subtlety of idolatry, so as even to excite the disgust and contempt of other nations.

Quis nescit, Volusi Bithynice, qualia demens  
Ægyptus portenta colat? Crocodilon adorat  
Pars hæc; illa pavet saturam serpentibus Ibîn.  
Effigies sacri nitet aurea cercopitheci,  
Dimidio magicæ resonant ubi Memnone chordæ,  
Atque vetus Thebe centum jacet obruta portis.  
Illic cœruleos, hic piscem fluminis, illic  
Oppida tota canem venerantur, nemo Dianam.  
Porrum et cape nefas violare, aut frangere morsu.  
O sanctas gentes, quibus hæc nascuntur in hortis  
Numina <sup>b</sup>!

And besides this difference of form and outward cast, which is observable in the different branches of the Gentile religion, there are other characteristics belonging to each, more strongly marked, and more essentially distinct. Thus, the Persian kindling his devotion in the blaze of an Eastern sun, the German and the Briton seeking it beside the blood-stained altar in the chilling gloom of a forest, the Egyptian carrying it about him like a disease, which rendered him morbidly sensitive to the sup-

<sup>b</sup> Juvenal, Sat. xv. See also Diodorus Siculus, (Bibl. Hist. lib. i. cap. 83, 84.) who speaks of the various forms of Egyptian idolatry, as more easy to relate than to credit. Mosheim has reconciled the apparent inconsistencies of history, with respect to these and the like statements, in an admirable note on Cadworth's Intellectual System, c. iv. sect. 18.

posed influence of the herb beneath his feet, and the reptile which crossed his path, the Roman combining it with war, triumph, or luxury, and the Greek with the arts, with poetry, and with philosophy,—are worshippers differing not so much in the nature of the objects adored, as in the frame of their devotion, in the ties which bound them to their faith, and in whatever may be supposed to result from a combination of national peculiarities, imparting each something to religion, and operating all to force it into that shape which might best accord with the whole national character.

Among these sources of difference, none deserve a specific notice more than the fine arts, especially sculpture and poetry.

Brief mention has already been made of the probable rise and progress of image worship. Its result on the popular conceptions of the divine nature is curious and instructive. Sculpture, of all the imitative arts, addresses itself most palpably and unequivocally to the bodily perceptions. Let it represent what it may, its subject forthwith becomes material ; its form must be defined, its substance measured, and to all incorporeal associations it yields unkindly and reluctantly. What wonder then that the great mass of a people, habituated from childhood to contemplate their deities so represented, should, in defiance of reason itself, entertain no higher notions of the divine than of the human nature ? One can hardly say how far



such early impressions may retain their hold, even on more enlightened and speculative minds ; nor, with the existence of such a phenomenon, can we wonder at the doctrine which some attributed to the Stoics, that the supreme Being was corporeal<sup>i</sup>.

What has been here suggested will derive some support from contrasting the Greek and Roman superstitions with those of the northern and oriental nations. In the former a divine vision was somewhat familiar to mortal eyes, at best “the gods come down to men in the shape of men ;” but the Persian found no description immaterial and extra-human enough for his Genii and Peris ; and in the sombre imagination of the northern enthusiast,

The mountain mist took form and limb  
Of noontide hag, or goblin grim.

It is true, that, with the highly-gifted idolaters of ancient Greece, sculpture became not merely an *imitative* but an imaginative art. In their hands it went as far into the province of fancy and pure intellect, as its nature possibly allows it to go. With them, therefore, its use for religious purposes had not exactly the same tendency, as with nations among whom it was more rude and uncouth. The brutal

<sup>i</sup> See Cic. De Nat. Deorum, lib. ii. c. 17, compared with lib. iii. c. 9—25.



thirst for blood, for instance, instilled into the heart of the warrior who bowed before a monster like Bel or Dagon, could have found no incitement in the classical image of Mars, arrayed in all the beauty of art, and conveying the stern inspiration of war, softened and humanized by the medium through which it passed. It was more like, in its effects, to the fair hand buckling on the spur or presenting the banner, in the days of chivalry. Still all this was no corrective of that peculiar bias which the mind received from the habitual contemplation of sculptured deity; and in none more conspicuously than in the most refined nations, has the wisdom of that restriction been justified, which forbade the Israelites, not the worship alone, but the most harmless use of images.

Still greater was the effect of poetry. What Herodotus<sup>k</sup> has asserted of Hesiod and Homer, that from them the Greeks learnt their theology, is nearly true of the earlier poets of all nations. The ancient heroes of each country form the first and natural theme of its bards; and these either had passed into the rank of gods, or were intimately connected with others who had attained that eminence.

Embracing then as his subject gods and departed heroes, the poet encountered a twofold difficulty. In his description of the gods, it required no

<sup>k</sup> Lib. ii. c. 53.

slight exercise of genius and fancy to create a definite image of a divine nature, active, and employed in an appropriate sphere of activity, without exposing it to so exact a scrutiny, as might betray the materials of which it was composed, and destroy the illusion. The task was doubtless easier where it was aided by the same efforts in the sculptor, but in all nations the method adopted was the same. They took as their basis a human being, and by amplifying its several qualities, and extending the sphere of their exercise, undertook to produce a god—a being not merely superior, but of a different nature from man. All their taste and ingenuity were put to the test, in keeping out of view those qualities which might betray the real character of this pretended divinity.

But a more trying task awaited the poet, in his representation of man as existing in a future state. The popular creed admitted no idea of bodily existence in a future state, but only of the existence of the soul. How then were men to be brought on the scene, divested of all which rendered them objects of perception? The same materials were again resorted to, and human nature was again moulded by the fancy into an immaterial essence. In the former instance it was a system of *amplification*, in this it was one of *diminution*. The disembodied man was described, by sometimes concealing one of his corporeal qualities, sometimes another, and so shifting the point of view, as never to expose

more at once, than was barely enough to render the figure perceptible. For an illustration of this we may refer to almost any passage in the sixth book of the *Æneid*, or the twelfth book of the *Odyssey*. Thus when Virgil brings his hero into the presence of the Dardan ghosts<sup>1</sup>:

Ut videre virum, fulgentiaque arma per umbras,  
Ingenti *trepidare* metu : pars *vertere terga*,  
Ceū quondam petiere rates.

He had made them see, move, and turn their backs. This was carrying the image almost too near ; he therefore makes his escape at the close :

pars tollere vocem  
Exiguam : inceptus clamor *frustratur* hiantes.

Homer, who was a more plain-spoken and inartificial poet, by a whimsical contrivance allowed himself more latitude in his phantasmagoria ; but, as if apologizing for his boldness, he occasionally puts in an avowal, that what he has so dressed up as to seem flesh and blood, has no more substance than a dream :

αὐτὴ δίκη ἐστὶ βροτῶν, ὅτε κέν τε θάνωσιν·  
Οὐ γὰρ ἔτι σάρκας τε καὶ ὀστέα ἴνες ἔχουσιν,  
Ἀλλὰ τὰ μέν τε πυρὸς κρατερόν μένος αἰθομένοιο  
Δαμνᾶ, ἐπεὶ κε πρῶτα λίπη λεύκ' ὀστέα θυμός·  
Ψυχὴ δ' ἥϊτ' ὄνειρος ἀποπταμένη πεπόνηται<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> *Æneid*, lib. vi. 490.

<sup>2</sup> *Odysseus*, lib. xi. 217.

Now these fictions being interwoven with the most vivid, if not the most serious, notions of religion, to the Divine nature was attributed all that was found in the human character—passions, prejudices, infirmities; and the stories which adhered to each god out of his true and original history as a man were perpetuated, and contributed still further to degrade the character of the deities. Add to this, that so palpable were the fabulous ingredients which were mixed up with what was taught as serious truth, that the least reflection on the subject was productive of scepticism and disbelief. Hence Pythagoras represented Hesiod and Homer doing penance in hell<sup>a</sup>, and Plato, the most poetical of philosophers, condemned all mythological poetry, even that of Homer, as unfit for the perusal of the young<sup>o</sup>.

Similar to this was the effect produced on the belief of a future state. The efforts of the poets, to make positive images of what only admitted of a negative description, reduced the notion of future existence to nothing. The rewards of the good were only shadows dealt out to shadows, and the punishments of the wicked the same. No wonder that the chequered scene of real life should be boldly maintained to be preferable to the fair but

<sup>a</sup> Diogenes Laertius, lib. viii.

<sup>o</sup> De Republica, lib. iii. Cicero, in his Tusculan Disputations, (lib. ii. c. 11.) where Plato's censure is spoken of, seems to have overlooked the chief motive for it.

unsubstantial glories of Elysium, or even of the heavenly mansions.

Βουλόμην κ' ἐπαύρουρος ἐὼν θητευέμεν ἄλλω  
 Ἄνδρ' παρ' ἀκλήρω, ᾧ μὴ βίोटος πολὺς εἴη,  
 ἥ πασιν νεκύεσσι καταφθιμένοισιν ἀνάσσειν<sup>ο</sup>,

was a sentiment, thought not unworthy of the high-minded Achilles, by the poet from whose works so many were content to derive their creed.

From this view of the subject it would appear, that the religion of the Gentiles must have lost ground from its connection with the fine arts and poetry. In another point of view, however, (which will be briefly adverted to by and by,) they made ample amends to it for the injury. It is time now to consider what provision had been made by the policy of legislators against these and other casual sources of irreligion.

This consisted in the establishment of those remarkable institutions, the Mysteries. Their origin has generally been attributed to Egypt, and their progress from that country to the rest of the Gentile world, has been traced through the legislators or founders of states, which Egypt either sent forth or instructed. According to the conjectures of some, they were the invention of a crafty priesthood, employed in maintaining their influence by investing religion with imposing and solemn circumstances.

<sup>ο</sup> Odyss. lib. xi. 488.



The author of the *Divine Legation of Moses* has, by the application of an immense body of learning to the subject, set them in the light of political devices, originating with the legislators, and designed to support civil society, by inculcating the doctrine of a future state<sup>p</sup>.

Probably the priests devised these, or the institutions out of which they were formed, solely with a view to the support of religion ; and statesmen and legislators, observing the success of the stratagem, contrived to have them moulded so as to suit their political views. Cooperating with the priest in the furtherance of his general object, they might both combine to give prominence to the great political doctrine of a future state of reward and punishment. In many instances, doubtless, the priest would himself be the chief man of the nation, as was the case with Melchisedech, and of Anius, whom Virgil describes as

rex idem hominum, Phœbique sacerdos<sup>q</sup>.

One conjecture further may be proposed. If in these singular institutions was preserved (as there is much reason to suppose was the case) the only authoritative instruction of the Gentile world in the unity and distinct nature of God, might they not have owed their origin to the righteous remnant, who, in the gradual encroachments of idolatry and

<sup>p</sup> Book ii. <sup>q</sup> *Æneid*, lib. iii. 80.

false religion, kept their faith, and would be likely enough to band together, and to form establishments of this kind<sup>r</sup>? We read in Scripture, that, at the period alluded to, “men first began to call upon the name of the Lord<sup>s</sup> ;” and if, by this, any secession and union of the faithful few be intended, the result of such associations would naturally be some form of symbolical or histrionic record, such as might give the groundwork of the Mysteries. Histrionic representation being the first rude mode by which men would probably express themselves, to records so preserved may be assigned an earlier date than to hieroglyphic symbols, or to the simplest monuments.

Their general adoption by states and people widely different in their other customs, plainly shews their importance to religion, whether supported on its own account, or for the sake of good government. Every where the celebration of the rites was a secret, and the most awful penalties were affixed to the divulging of it<sup>t</sup>. Every where also the secret was twofold, one for the great body of those who applied for admission, and another contained in a second initiation, reserved for a select few. In both some preparatory discipline was requisite, but in this latter it was rendered so inconvenient and even terrible, as to repress the curiosity or ambition of

<sup>r</sup> See Appendix [B].  
sinia, c. 20.

<sup>s</sup> Gen. iv. 26.

<sup>t</sup> See Meursii Eleu-



all, except those who from their rank in society, or from a higher tone of mind, sought it as a mark of distinction from the vulgar.

In this was displayed the policy of the institution. The exoteric doctrine, contained in the first initiation, was essential to the support of the popular religion, and of its great political feature, the dread of punishment after death. In this, therefore, was asserted the real existence of the gods, and the duty of public sacrifice and of obedience to the laws, as constituting a character meet for future reward.

Those who were admitted to the second initiation, and instructed in the esoteric doctrine, were entrusted, it appears, with a secret, which at first view might seem inconsistent with the alleged application and intent of the Mysteries ; for it exposed the true nature of the gods, and made a future state a dream". But it might have been deemed necessary or useful that the nature of the error should be partially known, so that there might be always a supply of persons the better qualified to preserve it, from their very knowledge of its weakness. It might also have been deemed more prudent to confess the truth to bold and inquiring minds, than to allow men to discover it for themselves, and to make use of it as their own acquisition and property. On this principle we may perceive why

<sup>u</sup> Warburton's *Divine Legation*, b. ii.

Socrates declined initiation, and why this refusal was imputed to him as somewhat suspicious in his character\*. In this then the tales of Tartarus and Elysium were explained away into fable and allegory, and the soul was represented as a portion of the Divine essence in a state of temporary separation from its source, and destined to return to its original condition either immediately upon death, or after passing through certain migrations, the object and necessity of which was to purify it from all that was extraneous to it.

Over all this scene of darkness, superstition, and fraud, the wide dispersion of the Jews might be expected to have scattered some rays of truth. To this source has been traced the general expectation which preceded the birth of the Messiah. National vanity, and the approaching crisis of long-cherished hopes, might have prompted the Jews to disclose this part of the Scriptures, however reserved they may be supposed to have been on other topics of religion. In their zeal for making proselytes, they might likewise have occasionally taught purer views of the Divine nature; but if so, their instruction was conveyed in such a manner, as to create no higher notion concerning Jehovah, than as of the tutelary deity of their nation. Their boasted claim to his peculiar care, perhaps tended to encourage this misconstruction.

\* Luciani *Demonax*. sect. 11.

One doctrine certainly there was, vaguely but universally entertained by the Gentile world, which was inconsistent with more correct views of God, than those above attributed to it. It was the belief in fate, necessity, or by whatever other name was expressed that mysterious principle, by which all that is divine or human was supposed to be controlled. Its supreme dominion was a main article in the popular creeds of all nations. It was supposed to circumscribe the free agency of the gods themselves, and even to assign a term to their existence. Prometheus is represented by Æschylus as solacing his spirit, when galled under the tyranny of Jupiter, by the reflection, that even this Lord of gods and men, could not escape the sentence which fate had pronounced on him. And that sentence was annihilation<sup>y</sup>.

The effect of this notion, even on the creed of the learned, was considerable. It was professedly maintained by the Stoics, and occasionally and perhaps unconsciously biassed the speculations of all sects, even of those who discarded it from their

<sup>y</sup> Æschyli Prom. v. 527. Many similar sentiments will readily occur to the classical reader. e. g. πρὸς τὴν ἀνάγκην οὐδ' Ἄγης ἀνθίσταται. Sophoclis Frag. δοῦλοι βασιλείων εἰσὶν ὁ δὲ βασιλεὺς Θεῶν, ὁ Θεὸς ἀνάγκης. Philemonis Reliq. See the remarks of Gassendi and others on Cudworth's Intellect. System, p. 56. and Mosheim's Dissert. ad Hist. Eccl. Pertinentes, vol. i. p. 355.

systems, or refused to recognize its existence as an independent principle.

The term fate, in its original import, is something uttered, a decree, a law, or expression of authority of some kind. To admit the existence of such a law, involves the admission of two further truths,—that there is a being who framed it, and that there is a subject to which it is applicable. Now if in its subject be embraced human affairs, (as was the Gentile doctrine,) and the law be not derived from God, nor controllable by him, the being from whom it proceeds, must at least hold divided empire with him, and the notion of one distinct and supreme nature is destroyed. Nevertheless, in this doctrine of fate, however corrupted and abused,—in this universal impression of a supreme Word which could not be reversed or gainsaid, we may possibly discover the last imperfect remnant of the true religion, as it existed at the era when men first began to corrupt it.

With the Gentiles, however, it rather served to perplex their view of a supreme Being, and gave rise to the most mischievous and artful contrivances of their religion. Under a pretence of discovering the application of the eternal decrees of fate to any given case, the wily, or enthusiastic, took on them the characters of soothsayers, augurs, and magicians. The abodes of those most famous for their skill became the seats of oracles, and their art was transferred to their successors, and

at length associated with the places. Agreeably to this notion, few oracles appear to have existed in the earliest ages of which there is any record, and the business of the oracle was performed by the soothsayer.

These arts and fraudulent practices of course took a tinge from the general character of religion, as it existed in different parts of the world. Thus in Egypt, where the doctrine of the Metempsychosis was most prevalent, they were connected with magical rites, and the consulting of departed souls. In the east, where the heavenly bodies were worshipped and were supposed to represent demons and spirits, the Wise men pretended to apply to these sources for supernatural information. So arose the practice and the name of Astrology. The flight of birds, and the character of the entrails in victims, (the materials of augury,) betray in like manner the notion of the soul, the divine principle, migrating through the bodies of these animals; a doctrine not unknown to the ancient Etrurians, to whom is attributed the invention of this art<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> Cicero de Divinat. lib. i. c. 2. Ovidii Met. lib. xv. 558. The connection, which has been here suggested, between augury and the belief that life, in man and brute alike, was a particle of the Divine essence, seems to be countenanced by the fact, that the entrails were examined whilst in the act apparently of parting with, and exhibiting, as it were, this imaginary subtle principle, *Spirantia consulti exta*. There is a ghastly description in Strabo, of the mode of divination practised by the Cimbrian women on human victims. See lib. vii. p. 425. ed. Falconer.



Of all these, the influence of oracles, originally the greatest, was the earliest overturned. Their extinction at the period of the Advent has been attributed to the miraculous expulsion of the spirits which presided over them on the appearance of Christ in the world. But there are natural causes to which it might certainly be referred. The machinery employed in them was more complicated and clumsy, and less easily disguised, than that used in the other similar arts, except perhaps magic. Besides which, all the arts of prescience had at some period or other enjoyed the patronage of the great empires and ruling powers of the world, and through their influence had been spread and upheld. Such had been the case with oracles in Greece, with magic in Egypt, astrology in Chaldæa and the East, with augury at Rome. At the commencement of the Christian era, Rome was all and sole powerful. Augury being the national art, was patronized by the government ; astrology and magic (although contrary to law) received a still more powerful support from the secret practice of individuals of rank, even of the Emperors themselves<sup>a</sup>. Oracles alone, having lost all accidental support, fell into disrepute and disuse. Something like an

<sup>a</sup> Taciti Ann. lib. vi. c. 20. Horace's Canidia, and the several allusions to the practice of magic, which are found in his writings, prove how popular the superstition was in the reign of Augustus. See Epod. v. Epist. lib. ii. 2. v. 208, &c.



allusion to this capricious transfer of credulity may be observed in those lines of Juvenal :

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Quicquid  
Dixerit Astrologus, credent a fonte relatum  
Ammonis ; quoniam Delphis oracula cessant,  
Et genus humanum damnat caligo futuri<sup>b</sup>.

As long as the learning of the Gentile world was confined to the priest, the statesman, and the law-giver, it was uniformly employed in these and whatever other superstitious practices tended to maintain the popular religion, and, through that, order and decorum. The Brachmans and the Magi might have despised the vulgar errors of their countrymen, but their more enlightened views were kept to themselves, or else cautiously communicated through the interior doctrine of the Mysteries. But, in truth, as far as there is any ground for conjecture, the wise men of old, comprehending the Magi, the Brachmans, the Druids, and even the far-famed sages of ancient Greece, exercised their reasoning powers but little, in investigating the truths of religion. They were occupied in perpetuating and expounding immemorial traditions, rather than in pursuing independent inquiries by the light of nature. They were priests and politicians, not philosophers.

To this latter character none have any claim

<sup>b</sup> Sat. vi. 553.

before the rise of those celebrated schools of Greek philosophy, which divided the learned world at the period of the Advent.

Yet even with these so strongly did the old custom operate, that in their teaching and writing they preserved a distinction similar to that which obtained in the Mysteries, and always framed an exoteric, as well as an esoteric system<sup>c</sup>. Their genuine opinions on religion were entrusted as secrets to a few, whilst publicly they maintained the grossest doctrines of the popular creed. Nay, to such an extent did they carry this sense of duty as good citizens, that when Euemerus made the alarming discovery of the secret of the Mysteries, the philosophers were the most active in replacing the veil which had been drawn aside; and much of that allegorical interpretation of the more absurd parts of the popular theology was applied to this purpose<sup>d</sup>, which has since exercised the ingenuity of one greater than the ancient sages<sup>e</sup>.

Owing to this double doctrine, the religious views of the philosophers exhibit an endless tissue

<sup>c</sup> Pythagoras, who resided many years in Egypt, and was there initiated in the Mysteries, introduced the practice into the famous Italic school, (Jamblichus, de Vita Pythag. c. vi.) which was the parent of the Eleatic, Heraclitan, Epicurean, and Sceptic sects. But it was not confined to the sects of any one family, nor to the philosophy of any one country. For an account of Aristotle's two Classes, see A. Gellius, lib. xx. c. 5.

<sup>d</sup> See Appendix [C.]

<sup>e</sup> See Lord Bacon's *Wisdom of the Ancients*.

of inconsistency, which renders it (even with this key) not always easy to discover what was their opinion as philosophers, what their doctrine as good citizens; and to the age for which they wrote, it doubtless answered the purpose of keeping their light under a bushel.

Besides, although they speculated much on the nature of God and of man, yet these speculations were not always applicable to religion. All religious inquiry, strictly speaking, is directed to the nature of God *as connected with man*, or again to the nature and condition of man *as connected with God*. Metaphysical discussions on the Divine nature, similar to those in which an attempt is made to analyze or arrange the principles of the human mind, are sometimes indeed confounded with religious views, but are really compatible with the most complete denial of all religion. Religious obligation arises not from the absolute nature of God, but from its relation to us. Accordingly Epicurus and his followers were content to admit the existence of a divine Being, as a philosophical truth, provided it was granted that he had no connection with the world<sup>f</sup>. Now much of the specu-

<sup>f</sup> Cicero represents Velleius as tracing the evils of a belief in religion, not to the doctrine that there is a God, but to the doctrine that he is Lord of the universe. *Imposuistis in cervicibus nostris sempiternum dominum, quem dies et noctes timeremus, quis enim non timeat omnia providentem et cogitantem, et animadvertentem; et omnia ad se pertinere putantem,*

lation of the philosophers was directed to this object, that is, to the absolute nature of God. It was indeed the chief, because it seemed the more scientific inquiry, and the other was only incidental.

The world, at the period in which Christianity was published to it, was divided by the opinions of the Epicureans, the Stoics, the Academics, and the oriental philosophy ; which last had arisen out of an alliance between the school of Plato and the eastern creed. To these may be added the Alexandrian school, although it was not until the close of the second century, that this last assumed its peculiar character and importance, in attempting to combine in one Eclectic system, as it was termed, the Christian doctrines, the tenets of the Greek philosophy, and the fanciful theories of Egypt and of the East.

Of these, the Epicureans denying the existence, or, what amounts to the same, the authority and providence of God, contributed nothing to the general stock of religious knowledge. The remaining sects, however at issue in other respects, agreed thus far, that the relation between the divine and human nature was that of a whole to its parts ; a doctrine which may be considered under two heads. First, as to the divine essence ; that it was the source of the human soul, and the principle

into which it would, either immediately after death, or ultimately after certain stages of purification, return and be absorbed. Secondly, as to human nature; that it was partly mortal, partly immortal; destined in one sense to survive death, in another to be destroyed by it. Now both these views fell very far short of what is commonly understood, when the ancients are said to have admitted or discovered the existence of the one true God, and the immortality of the soul. As far as the mere expression goes, they doubtless acknowledged the existence of one God as unequivocally as a Jew or a Christian; but if by the term God they understood a being of a different nature from him acknowledged by Jew and Christian, their mode of expression cannot be reasonably urged as a proof that they coincided with enlightened believers in this fundamental article of faith. Now that this was the case is plain. Taking the human soul as a portion and a sample of the Godhead<sup>ε</sup>, their view of a divine source could not have differed essentially from their view of the human soul; it was necessarily endued with parts and passions, and its nature measured and judged of by reference to ours. The Stoics indeed, (as was before observed,) are by some understood to have gone so far, as to deem a body requisite for the existence of the Divine mind.

<sup>ε</sup> Μόρια Θεοῦ καὶ ἀποσπασμάτια. Arriani Diss. in Epictetum, lib. i. c. 14.



Their notions on the second point, were still further removed from what we are apt to understand, when it is asserted that the ancients admitted the immortality of the soul. In truth, the immortality which they inculcated was even inconsistent with the future existence of man *as man*. Far from implying any future consciousness of separate existence, of happiness or misery, it amounted to this,—that a portion of the divine essence had gone forth, (which process some illustrated by the image of emanations and rays proceeding from the fountain of light, until they nearly confounded the thing represented with its emblem,) that whatever substance it pervaded became endued with some modification of life or reason ; and that the withdrawing and resuming this vital ray occasioned the phenomena of death. This taking place, the deserted mass of matter went to annihilation, or else returned to a chaos, to await another union with another portion of creative virtue. What has all this in common with the Christian doctrine of the resurrection ? Was it not natural that men should consider that doctrine when preached to them as somewhat new, and contradicting all their preconceived opinions ?

From this view of the philosophical creed of the Gentile world, it will not appear essentially to have differed from the esoteric doctrines of the Mysteries. The credit and authority of those doctrines were nevertheless greatly shaken by their appearance in



this new form. Removed from the old basis of tradition, mystery, and state authority, the unsoundness of their foundation became more apparent to vulgar eyes ; and the endless variety of opinion which prevailed, without any acknowledged standard, gave a doubtful character to the subject, and deprived every view of it alike of the appearance of divine sanction.

Accordingly, with the rise and diffusion of philosophy, a disbelief and contempt of religion increased and spread abroad. The ruin of social order began to be predicted in the further growth of scepticism so produced. The wisdom of other nations was extolled, because they did no more than expound the traditions of their fathers, and the Greek philosophy was stigmatised as the source of innovation, and as tending to unsettle men's minds. " Can one do otherwise," exclaims *Ælian*, " than commend the wisdom of the Barbarians ? Amongst them, no one ever fell into atheism, amongst them there are no controversies about the gods, no questioning whether there are really such beings or not, and whether they are interested about us or not<sup>h</sup>." In the same spirit *Diodorus Siculus* complains of the perpetual innovations of the Greek philosophers in the views of their predecessors, even on the most important topics : " The Barbarians," he observes, " go on in one unvarying

<sup>h</sup> Var. Hist. lib. ii. c. 31.

course, and are firm to their principles ; but the Greeks, who consider philosophy as a gainful profession, are for setting up new sects, and opposing theory to theory on the most momentous subjects, so that their pupils only acquire the habit of doubting, their minds wander in perpetual uncertainty, and become in short incapable of any firm conviction<sup>i</sup>.”

Not that the belief of the Gentile world was then first shaken, or only by these means. The behaviour of professed believers, under circumstances wherein faith is put to the test, is every where decisive against the existence of such a principle, to any great extent at least<sup>k</sup>. Thus the Athenians are represented by their observant and faithful historian and fellow-citizen, as becoming more and more irreligious, as the ravages of the famous plague at Athens increased<sup>l</sup>; and Pliny, in his account of the eruption of Vesuvius, in which his uncle perished, records amongst the striking events of that awful scene, a general distrust of divine aid, arising from the notion that the gods themselves were possibly involved in the impending ruin<sup>m</sup>.

Powerful ties there were which bound men to the religion of their fathers ; ties which only a divine

<sup>i</sup> Biblioth. Hist. lib. xi. c. 29.

<sup>k</sup> See Whately's *Essays on some peculiarities of the Christian Religion*.

<sup>l</sup> Thucyd. lib. ii. c. 53.

<sup>m</sup> Epist. lib. vi. ep. 20.

hand could have unloosed, but they were not the result of conviction. Religion had become, partly through accident, partly through the policy of legislators, interwoven into the whole system of public and private life. Never separated from the glories of war, or the repose of peace, it came to be considered inseparable from each. Its genius haunted every path of life, and adapted itself to every change of manners and circumstances. In the theatre, the circus, and the midnight revel, it continued as familiar to the degenerate Romans, as when it gave a zest to the rustic festival, or animated the rude pageantry of a triumph, in their days of simple hardihood. The tasteful and imaginative Greek believed it, if belief it may be called, not for its own sake, but for the sake of Homer, and Phidias, and Apelles,—for the sake of the bard whose song was voucher for its truth, and the monuments of art, in which it stood embodied and enshrined. When the suppliant seated himself beside the household gods, and placed on his knee the child of his enemy, he calculated wisely on the principle, which sanctified the gods themselves in the eyes of the father and the master of the family<sup>a</sup>: nor did Julian display less policy, when in his endeavours to restore the reign of paganism, he directed his efforts, not so

<sup>a</sup> See the description of Themistocles taking refuge with Admetus. Thucyd. lib. i. c. 136.

much to the conviction of men's minds, as to the renewal of these broken associations<sup>o</sup>.

With this view of the Gentile world before us, we shall be able to estimate how far they stood in need of a revelation, what reception they might be expected to give to Christianity, and how the first Christian preachers were likely to shape their teaching, so as to render it acceptable or intelligible, and to guard against the errors to which the heathen were most liable. All their systems, we see, were recommended and embraced, because they were useful, or honourable, or convenient. Christianity alone advanced the singular claim of being true, and of being adopted because it was true. Religion had not yet become the subject of *a creed*. Its evidences, a theme so familiar to Christian ears, sounded to the Gentiles as an idle topic, the discussion of which they could not understand to be necessary to the reception of a religion. "What is truth?" said Pilate to Jesus<sup>p</sup>, not surely in jest, as Lord Bacon would explain it, but as if he had asked, What mean you by speaking about truth? what has truth to do with the subject? It was altogether a new way of propagating a religion, to invite converts, not to conform to its institutions, but to *believe*, and to let their actions be agreeable

<sup>o</sup> See Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, vol. iv. c. 23.

<sup>p</sup> John xviii. 38.

to truth ; and nothing was more natural, than that Christianity should receive names expressive of this grand peculiarity, the Truth and the Faith.

Independently then of any agreement or disagreement which the Gentiles might find between the doctrines of the Gospel, and their preconceived notions, they would be indisposed to attend to the evidence which attested its divine authority. There was another unfavourable circumstance about its claims. It could not but seem unreasonable and presumptuous, that one religion should be expected to prevail all over the world, to the exclusion of every other ; and that too a religion derived, as it appeared, from a small contemptible tributary of the empire. Had the proposal been merely to have Christianity admitted as one among the many foreign systems patronised at Rome, it would hardly have been rejected ; and this indeed seems to have been actually contemplated by Tiberius<sup>9</sup> ; but it was deemed preposterous in the Christians to insist on an exclusive claim.

There was one circumstance, indeed, which might seem likely to have awakened the attention of the Gentiles to a more candid and earnest consideration even of these unusual claims. It is well attested, that, at the birth of our Saviour, a very general rumour prevailed, that an extraordinary person was about to appear, and to effect some great change in

<sup>9</sup> Tertulliani Apol. c. v. Eusebii Hist. lib. ii. c. 2.



the condition of the world. Bishop Horsley, learned and ingenious on this as on every subject, accounts for it by supposing prophecies of the Messiah to have been preserved, together with other records of the primitive religion of mankind, in the Sibylline verses, and in other writings of a similar character<sup>r</sup>. Admitting that he has made out a plausible case, his theory is nevertheless liable to this objection, that it supposes the prophecies derived from patriarchal times, to have been more determinate and more easily interpreted, than the corresponding prophecies recorded in Genesis, or even than those of a much later period. For, if we imagine the case of the Scriptural prophecies themselves being brought under the notice of the Gentiles, in the same manner as the Sibylline verses were, the Gentiles would never surely have elicited, even from them, the alleged expectation, embracing as it does the precise period of the Messiah's appearance. Perhaps, too, it may be fairly questioned, whether the records of the patriarchal era would not in all likelihood have been handed down in the histrionic form, such as was exhibited in the Mysteries, or by means of rude monuments, rather than as "the Sibyl's leaves." Whether indeed the character and contents of these strange productions were really and altogether such as they are represented, is itself a point on which the inquirer has no means of

<sup>r</sup> See Dissertation on the Prophecies relating to the Messiah dispersed among the heathen.



judging for himself, inasmuch as no specimen of the genuine Sibylline verses has been preserved.

Those, then, to whom Bishop Horsley's view shall seem unsatisfactory, may be disposed to refer the origin of the expectation (at least as regards the eastern nations) to the Jewish Scriptures. Tacitus and Suetonius, it is to be observed, limit to the eastern world this expectation of an universal monarch arising thence\*; and nothing is more probable, than that the prophecies of Daniel especially should be familiar to the Persian Magi.

Indeed, that the Gentile view should, like that of the Jewish nation, have been directed to an *universal king*, forms of itself a powerful objection to the notion, that the source of that view was distinct. In the original and primitive view of the Messiah, he would surely have been characterised as *the Antagonist of evil*, or *the Purifier of man's corrupt nature*. The notion of *dominion* as a prominent feature in his office, carries on the face of it the Jewish bias of interpreting *literally* their later prophecies, which described him *metaphorically* as one *qui rerum potiretur*.

It is remarkable too, that the Jews, from the period of their being intrusted with those prophecies which were likely to be most intelligible to the heathen, were, as if by special appointment, brought more immediately into intercourse with

\* Taciti Hist. lib. v. c. 13. Sueton. Vespasian. c. 4.

the most powerful and influential nations of the world,—with the Assyrians and Babylonians, with the Persians, with the Greeks, and lastly with the Romans. Of these, the Greeks and Romans, it may be said, were little likely to have studied the sacred volume, even had their attention been solicited to it, by those in whose hands it was deposited. Yet even these could hardly fail of imbibing some notion of the Messiah, and of the fulness of the time, from the conversation of the Jews, who were every where resident amongst them. National vanity, and the ardour of a hope such as theirs about to be fulfilled, must have tempted them to descant on this, however reserved in general on religious topics; and the more as the fated period drew nearer. The notion having once gained ground among the Gentiles, they would naturally enough see it intimated likewise in their national oracles, whose number, variety, and generality, fitted them to furnish almost any view of any subject. Thus the attention of men being once directed to the topic, the vague descriptions of the Sibylline verses might have been applied to a specific time and person, and have become useful for the intrigue of the politician, or the delicate flattery of the poet<sup>t</sup>.

<sup>t</sup> See Virgil's Pollio, and Heyne's prefatory remarks. It appears from Dio Cassius and Plutarch, that Julius Cæsar searched the Sibylline verses for some prediction respecting a

Viewing this general expectation of the heathen world then, as derived either directly or indirectly from the holy Scriptures, we shall be at no loss to account for the small influence it had, in exciting the curiosity of the Gentiles, to inquire more eagerly concerning the expected Great One, of those who proclaimed him as having now appeared, and as having sent them forth as his delegates. He who was to come, was viewed, through the prejudiced medium of Judaism, as a temporal prince. But the obscure birth of Jesus, his unambitious course of life, and his meek submission to a humiliating death, seemed at once to render the prophecy inapplicable to him. None other appearing to claim its application, according to this view, it was probably soon forgotten or disregarded. No appeal, none at least that we know of, was ever made to it by the Apostles, nor do any of the Gentiles, to whom they went, appear to have connected their mission with it<sup>u</sup>.

great king and conqueror, for the purpose of applying it to himself, and assuming the title of king. (Dio. Cass. lib. xlv. p. 247. and Plutarch in Cæsare, c. 60.) Cicero probably alludes to the fact in his *De Divinatione*, (l. ii. c. 54.) “*cum antis-tibus agamus, ut quidvis potius ex illis libris, quam Regem proferant.*”

<sup>u</sup> It was again brought into notice by the rebellion of the Jews, who are said to have rested their hopes of succour on it; and it was then applied by some to Vespasian and Titus. See Tacit. Hist. lib. v. c. 13. and Euseb. lib. iii. c. 8.

As to the Gospel itself, its doctrines and its precepts, the facility with which the Gentiles would understand or embrace them, would of course depend much on their existing views of morals, of the divine nature, and of a future state.

In the systems of the Greek philosophers they possessed moral rules, the close agreement of which with the Gospel precepts, could not but cause the latter to be familiar, and ensure them a favourable reception. Here was the proper sphere of reason, and she had done her part nobly. It is not perhaps too much to assert, that, with the exception of forgiveness of injury and humility, the heathen sketch of the moral character (such as is found, for instance, in the *Ethics* of Aristotle) required no feature to be added, but only some correction and a higher finish. This, be it remembered, detracts nothing from the character of the Gospel. To deny it, were indeed to wrong religion and its inspired teachers, in more respects than one. For, first, if the Gentiles had not the faculties to enable them to arrive at just notions of their duty, how could they be chargeable with that sinfulness which St. Paul imputes to them? Again, what right has the Christian advocate to recommend the Gospel on the score of its morality, if from the Gospel mankind first learnt what morality was? It is only arguing in a circle. The truest statement will always be found the most favourable to the Gospel of truth.

The connection between religion and morals is another matter. To this indeed the Gentiles were strangers, and not easily to be reconciled. What Josephus has asserted of his countrymen, was still more applicable to the Christians, contrasted with the heathen\*. Others made religion a part of virtue, they made virtue a part of religion. The duties of sacrifice, of prayer, and of reverence for the gods, implied no obligation to practise virtue; and the observance of these duties was no otherwise connected with moral behaviour, than as it constituted a part of the character of a good citizen.

There was withal a deep-rooted prejudice concerning the dignity of human nature. Men were supposed capable, of raising themselves by merit to the highest scale of existence, and of deserving to be numbered with the gods.

Hac arte Pollux et vagus Hercules  
Enisus, arces attigit igneas†.

That virtue should not be *entitled* to reward; that the good should find a place in heaven, not as their natural right, but as a favour; and that a great and mysterious atonement was requisite for the sins of each and of all; these were doctrines

\* Adv. Apion, lib. ii. c. 14.

† Horat. Carm. lib. iii. 3. So Virgil, *Æn.* ix. 640.

Macte nova virtute puer, sic itur ad astra.



not merely unacceptable, but almost incomprehensible.

Enough has been already said of the prevailing notions concerning the nature of the gods, to shew that the Gentiles were familiar with the conception of a Deity assuming the form and body of man<sup>2</sup>. The doctrine of God manifested in the flesh, would not, therefore, be likely to startle them, nor do we accordingly hear of any surprise or scruple which it occasioned. At the same time, nothing could be more revolting to their natural views of such a Being, than that he should lead a life of humiliation and persecution, and submit to an ignominious death. It was Christ *crucified* that was “foolishness to the Greeks.”

Another popular view which they entertained, concerning the nature of a Deity, must not pass unnoticed. It is well known, that in the common creed of Greece, Diana, Hecate, and Luna, were held to be different objects of worship,

<sup>2</sup> The heathen view must not however be confounded with the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation. It so far resembled it, as to prevent it from being strange and unacceptable; but it differed very materially from it. The heathen supposed the human form, on these occasions, not to be perfect man, but a body animated by the Deity. It is not surprising, accordingly, that among the ancient heresies, there should be this very view taken of the person of Christ. The Docetæ denied his human nature, and asserted him to be God only, in the likeness of man, or rather, a human frame, inhabited and animated, not by a human soul, but by the Æon only, which they called the Word.



and yet one and the same Deity. The Jupiter and Apollo of one place, could not always be blended with the Jupiter and Apollo of another<sup>a</sup>, yet was there only one Jupiter and one Apollo. A striking illustration of this may be found in Xenophon's account of the retreat of the ten thousand. He had made a vow to Ephesian Diana of a portion of the spoils of war, and he fulfilled it, according to his own account, not by sending these gifts to Ephesus, but by consecrating a temple to Ephesian Diana in Greece<sup>b</sup>.

How far this notion may have operated, in enabling the Gentiles to understand, or in disposing them to listen to the Christian preachers, who taught that there was one God, and that he was to be worshipped in the person of God the Father who created all the world, of God the Son who redeemed all mankind, and of God the Holy Ghost who sanctifieth all the elect people of God, the Christian reader may determine for himself. Certain it is, that no Scriptural truth is more clearly taught than this. It is equally certain, that, while for so many centuries, of all the Christian doctrines, that of a Trinity in Unity has been considered as the most obscure and mysterious, in the records and writings of the Apostles, there is not a trace

<sup>a</sup> Thus Herodotus, enumerating the privileges of the kings of Sparta, distinguishes the Priesthood of the Lacedæmonian Jupiter from that of the Heavenly Jupiter. *Erato*, c. 56.

<sup>b</sup> *Anab. lib. v. c. 3.*

of any scruple which it created—it seems to have called for no explanation, and is not even spoken of as a mystery.

That a general disbelief of a future state prevailed, has been already stated. The subject had indeed long ceased to furnish any serious argument for hope or fear. When Pericles is represented by the historian, as exhausting every topic of consolation, in his eloquent address to the surviving friends of those who had fallen in battle; he speaks of their glorious memory, and of the parents' hope that other sons may be born to fill their place and emulate their worth, but not one syllable is there of their future life and immortality<sup>c</sup>. Cicero acknowledges, that the Epistle of Sulpicius on the death of Tullia, comprehended every argument for comfort which the case admitted; yet we search that Epistle in vain, for the slightest allusion to the one topic, which would have been uppermost in the mind of a believer, professedly consoling a father for the loss of his daughter<sup>d</sup>. Even in the Roman Senate, Julius Cæsar once ventured

<sup>c</sup> Thucyd. lib. ii. c. 35. *et seq.*

<sup>d</sup> Ciceronis Epist. lib. iv. ep. 5 and 6. *Quod si etiam inferis sensus est, &c.* is a mode of expression, which conveys more than a doubt, whether the dead were sensible of joy or sorrow. The introduction of the remark too, without a single suggestion of Tullia's immortal destiny, proves, not merely that Sulpicius was himself a sceptic, but that he considered the mention of it as unfit for a serious argument.

to appeal to the *real* opinion of his audience, that a future state contained nothing either to hope for or to dread; and was seconded in the avowal by Cato<sup>d</sup>.

It was, therefore, nothing wonderful that St. Paul should be mocked by his Athenian audience for preaching Jesus and the resurrection<sup>e</sup>. The doctrine seemed beneath their serious notice, and was despised for its apparent absurdity. And this, not merely because it was disbelieved, but because men's minds had never been accustomed to it, even in the fables of Elysium and Tartarus. A bodily resurrection was unheard of, the idea of man's identity in a future state was altogether new; and heathen records agree with the statement of the Bible, that it was Jesus Christ who brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel.

## II. RELIGION OF THE JEWS.

IN estimating the state of religion among the Jews at the period of the Advent of our Saviour, two points of inquiry must be kept distinct: the one, what their Law and Prophets were apparently designed to teach them; the other, what they actually did learn from these sources<sup>f</sup>. That the Jewish Scriptures were so interpreted as to render

<sup>d</sup> Sallust. in Catalin. c. 51, 52.

<sup>e</sup> Acts xvii. 32.

<sup>f</sup> See Appendix, [D.]

the promised Messiah unacceptable to the great body of the nation, is plain from a cursory perusal of the Gospels. It is equally plain that the Jewish Scriptures were calculated to produce a quite contrary effect. With reference, therefore, to this, and to other points, it will be necessary to consider both the Jewish dispensation in itself, and as it was received by the people at large, and by the various sects which existed among them.

In God's occasional communications with any people or individual of old, his messages were conveyed as much by signs and types as by words. Of a practice so well known, no example or illustration can be necessary. Agreeably to this method, we find the religion of the Jews deposited, partly in their Scriptures, partly in ceremonies and institutions, and the service required of them consisting even more in representation than in verbal expression. They sacrificed more than they prayed. Instead of a form of words annually addressed to heaven on account of their deliverance from Egypt, the scene was annually represented by the ceremony of the Passover.

A religion so constituted would naturally contain a vast body of rites, many of them in themselves trivial and unmeaning, and deriving importance and significance only from being viewed as symbols. Had the ceremonial Law, indeed, been composed of rites and observances important or more than trivial in themselves, those who practised them would

have been still more likely to regard them as valuable on their own account, and not for the further object to which they pointed. Considered thus, then, the ceremonial portion of the Law will appear as another mode of conveying the same instruction as its verbal precepts. It was unto each man "a sign upon his hand, and a memorial between his eyes, that the Lord's law might be in his mouth<sup>g</sup>." Some of its ordinances, no doubt, had reference to the idolatrous practices of the neighbouring Gentiles, concerning which our information is too imperfect for us to estimate fully the fitness of those ordinances. Others again were obviously lessons of morality and piety. A third, and the most important class, were calculated to prepare the nation for a candid and ready admission of the Messiah's claims, and of the Christian revelation. One or more of these objects was probably intended in each rite, however trivial.

The minute directions, for instance, respecting the treatment of lepers. To the Jews these directions furnished a sort of histrionic sermon, displaying the foul nature of sin, its contagious character, the precautions requisite to enable the healthiest and strongest minds to escape its influence; lastly, its offensiveness to God, and the necessity of a mysterious cleansing and sanctification by blood. In all cases of legal defilement, purity was to be restored

<sup>g</sup> Exod. xiii. 9.



by the intervention of a high priest, by the offering of a sacrifice, and (whenever it was practicable) by the blood of a victim. The continual repetition of these scenes was like the continual reading of moral and religious lessons to the Jews, in a language agreeable to the habits of the most ancient times, and therefore impressive and intelligible. And if these rites did not actually convey a notion of the one great High Priest, who was to cleanse all mankind from moral defilement by the sacrifice of himself, yet they were calculated to habituate the Jews to that way of thinking, which should render the doctrine nothing strange and revolting, but on the contrary highly natural and acceptable.

Nevertheless, Christ crucified was to the Jews a stumbling-block ; which must have been owing to some wrong bias, which their minds received from those who pretended to guide them in the interpretation of the Law and the Prophets.

To explain the nature and origin of this bias, two passages of Jewish history must be brought under notice. The one is the intercourse between the Jews and the Gentiles, especially the Egyptians ; the other is the rise of the traditional law into supreme authority.

I. As early as the period of the Babylonian captivity some settlement of the Jews in Egypt appears to have been formed<sup>h</sup>. At all events, from the

<sup>h</sup> Jeremiah xlii. and xliii.



foundation of Alexandria they began to be established there in great numbers. The illustrious founder of that city allowed them a share of privileges in common with his Macedonian colonists, and the free exercise of their religion; and his liberal policy towards them was continued by his successors<sup>i</sup>. Increasing in numbers and importance, they at length obtained permission to build a temple for themselves in Egypt, in order to avoid the inconvenience attending the yearly resort of so many to Jerusalem<sup>k</sup>. This was a most important step. Weakening the ties of filial dependence by which the Jews of Egypt were bound to the holy city, it was the occasion of their becoming more devotedly attached to the place of their abode, and more liable to the mischievous effects produced on their faith by their connection with it. They now began to imbibe many of the absurd fancies of the heathen philosophy, so much cultivated at that time at Alexandria, and blended it in their view of their own sacred doctrines. Accustomed to contemplate a secondary meaning in their Law and Prophets, they too readily yielded to the seduction of the famous Platonic school of Alexandria, the aim of which was, by allegorical interpretation, so to adapt itself to every other system, as that all should appear consistent and the same—a method after-

<sup>i</sup> Josephi Ant. Jud. lib. xi. c. 8. and lib. xii. c. 1.

<sup>k</sup> Ejusdem, lib. xiii. c. 3.

wards practised with the like success on Christianity. This false wisdom soon spreading from Egypt to Judæa, the Jewish creed, both at home and abroad, became not a little changed and distorted by the artificial light thus thrown on it<sup>1</sup>.

As the period of the Advent drew nigh, the rest also of the Gentile world became so interspersed with Jews, as to justify almost a literal acceptance of St. James's assertion, that Moses had in every city them that preached him<sup>m</sup>. Yet it does not appear that the Jewish creed was generally affected by this varied intercourse. Egypt was the channel at least, through which any foreign impression was conveyed. There was a fatality in the connection of the Jews with Egypt, and when it ceased to be a scourge, it became a snare to them.

At the same time, it must not be supposed that the intercourse between the Jews and Gentiles was productive of unmixed mischief to the former<sup>n</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> See Bruckeri *Historia Critica Philosophiæ*, tom. ii. pp. 690, and 697.

<sup>m</sup> Acts xv 21.

<sup>n</sup> Warburton has suggested that the Jews were cured of idolatry from the period of the Babylonish captivity, not so much by the severity of the punishment which they had undergone, as by *their subsequent acquaintance with the Greek philosophy*. Their previous religious knowledge enabled them, he observes, to derive from the heathen writings an advantage of which the heathen themselves were incapable. The wiser and better sort of Gentiles learnt to despise indeed the authority of their popular superstitions, but they had no means of going beyond this

Part, indeed, of the scheme of Providence, in extending that intercourse so greatly at that precise period, might have been to afford the Jews, as well as the Gentiles, an opportunity of acquiring more preparatory light than either enjoyed, for the glorious scene which was approaching. And although this opportunity was not generally embraced by either, there were, doubtless, many, both of the Jews and of the Gentiles, on whom it was not lost ; many among the Jews, such as Simeon and Anna ; many among the Gentiles, such as the good Centurion and Cornelius. From this intercourse the Gentiles might have derived clearer notions of the character of that universal Lord who was expected to arrive out of the East, if, indeed, the expectation were not wholly derived from that source. On the other hand, the Jews might have been roused to search their Scriptures for the true account of certain matters on which the Gentiles speculated largely, and which were so imperfectly revealed to the Jews, as to be likely to be unnoticed without some call for investigation—as, for instance, the doctrine of a future state. How much the publication of the Gospel was facilitated by the establishment of synagogues in every great city is obvious ;

scepticism and infidelity. The Jews learnt from the same sources to view the heathen worship in its true light ; but this immediately confirmed them in their own faith, the contrasted character of which left them no room to pause in general scepticism. See *Divine Legation*, book v. sect. 2.

and this, too, was not an exclusive benefit to the Gentiles, for the Jew abroad was likely to be more free and fearless in submitting his mind to the humiliating truths which were to be disclosed, inasmuch as he was removed from the chief seat of national prejudice, and was unawed by the presence of that authority which upheld it.

II. Of the true origin of the traditional Law there is no certain account, which is remarkable, considering that it constituted the main line of separation between the contending sects. According to its advocates, it was delivered by God to Moses on mount Sinai, together with the written Law, and was therefore asserted to be of equal authority with it. Their opponents contented themselves with refusing assent to this statement, without, however, either denying the antiquity of these traditions, or assigning them any specific source or date°.

It is probable, from this uncertainty, as well as from the character of the traditions themselves, (for, if they have been faithfully recorded in the Talmuds, they are little more than a tissue of minute rules superadded to those in Scripture concerning the observance of the ritual law,) that they were the gradual accumulation of many centuries. Originally, perhaps, mere directions for determining matters left indeterminate in Scripture, they acquired

° Josephi Antiq. Jud. lib. xiii. c. 10.

from usage and habitual compliance an equal authority with the law itself<sup>p</sup>. Be it as it may, the enlargement of the ritual Law suited well with that bias of mind in the nation at large, which in those latter days was more fully displayed in the character of the Pharisee—a tendency, namely, to forget the twofold nature of the Law, and to consider that as valuable on its own account, which there was every reason to believe was only valuable from its reference to some other object, even although that object might not always have been clear and distinctly to be seen. Going then on the principle, that the works of the Law were to be regarded as an ultimate and independent object, that its intent was to make the comers thereunto perfect, not to shadow out the good things appointed for that purpose, the traditionist thought, consistently enough, that by adding rite to rite, and rule to rule, he should enlarge the sphere of meritorious conduct. And if the written Law contained enough for justification, the superadded value of the works of the unwritten Law would be more than the purchase of divine reward.

This was the righteousness of the Pharisees, the most considerable sect at the period of the Advent. They were the class into which the learned naturally

<sup>p</sup> See Prideaux's *Connection*, part i. b. v. where the source of these traditions is assigned to the age of Ezra and the return from the captivity.

fell, and being revered for their Scriptural erudition, and for the strictness of their lives, the great body of the people was content to subscribe to their doctrines, and to adopt their views of Scripture without aspiring to be Pharisees in holiness any more than in learning. On them the vulgar gazed, as on men whose righteous attainments went so far beyond what was needful, as to be admirable rather than good, and beheld them in their long fastings, their reiterated prayers, and their profound meditations, advancing ever, as it seemed, from superior to supreme sanctity<sup>q</sup>. It will be readily conceived, that to such men the doctrine of good works being insufficient and ineffectual for salvation, and of the necessity of atonement for the sins of all, must have been light too distressing for them to open their eyes upon without a painful effort; and that they were likely for the most part to be obstinately blind to all evidence. And what must have been the result on the people who were under their

<sup>q</sup> Goodwin, in his *Moses and Aaron*, gives a quaint but very graphic description of the varieties of the Pharisaical character, as represented in the Talmuds. Among them he enumerates

“*Pharisæus truncatus*, so called, as if he had no feet, because he would scarce lift them from the ground when he walked, to cause the greater opinion of his meditation.

“*Pharisæus mortarius*, so called, because he wore a hat in manner of a deep mortar, such as they use to bray spice in, insomuch that he could not look upward, nor of either side; only downward on the ground, and forward, or forthright.”  
Lib. i. c. x.



guidance? The Pharisees bade them, indeed, conform to the law, and especially to the ceremonial law, but they took away the key of knowledge, that unlocked its mysterious meaning, or else, substituted for its true secondary meaning, something that was fanciful and foreign. They enjoined obedience to the divine precepts, even to the letter of the commandment; but whenever obedience proved hard or inconvenient, some one of the numerous traditions (the divine source and authority of which they maintained) was readily found to make the case an exception.

It might have been expected, that the sect which professedly stood forth to oppose the corruptions of the Pharisees would have done something towards bringing the Jews back to a purer view of their Scriptures. But this was very far from being the case. The sect alluded to—that of the Sadducees—is the only other (religious sect, at least) noticed in the New Testament. These pseudo-reformers rejected, indeed, the traditions of the Pharisees, but they continued to look as blindly as their opponents on the genuine Scriptures; and they have even been charged with denying the authority of all except those written by Moses<sup>r</sup>. This, it must be confessed, does not appear probable; at least such a tenet would seem inconsistent with the office of

<sup>r</sup> Origen. *con. Celsum*, lib. i. c. 49. Tertullian asserts the same.

the high priesthood, from which it is certain that they were not excluded<sup>a</sup>. Nor, again, is it likely that in their controversy with the Pharisees, the latter would have appealed to the Prophets, (as appears to have been the case<sup>b</sup>;) unless the Prophets had been acknowledged as authority by both. The Sadducees were in truth freethinkers and scoffers; a society which was the receptacle of all who were willing or able to free themselves from the restraints of religion. The Sadducee was the rich sensualist, and the man of the world; and his tenets were, doubtless, pliable enough not to interfere with his promotion to the highest office in the Jewish Church.

It is observable, that one of the distinguishing features of a sect so characterised, should be the assertion that man's good and evil destiny depends entirely on his own exertions. Whilst the Pharisee contended for a fated course of events, so contrived however as to be compatible with a free agency in man, the Sadducee maintained that he was left altogether to himself, to work out his own happiness or misery<sup>c</sup>. And yet (notwithstanding his belief in those Scriptures which represented reward as attached to virtue, and punishment to vice) he lived the life which, *a priori*, would be assigned to the fatalist. So requisite does it seem,

<sup>a</sup> Acts v. 17. and Josephi Antiq. lib. xiii. c. 10.

<sup>b</sup> See Basnage Hist. liv. ii. c. 6. and Bruckeri Hist. Crit. Phil. tom. ii. p. 722.

<sup>c</sup> Josephi Antiq. Jud. lib. xiii. c. 5.

from every experimental view of human conduct, that other motives to the practice of virtue, should be added to the hope of reward, and the fear of punishment.

The doctrine of the Sadducees took its rise, it is said, from a refinement which their founder, Sadoc, made on the teaching of his master, Antigonus Sochæus. The latter had been wont to dwell on the duty of serving God, not like a slave with a view to reward and punishment, but from disinterested motives\*. Upon this Sadoc built his theory, that no reward or punishment would be distributed in a future state. From this point it was a very easy step to the denial of man's immortality, and that was as easily followed up with a denial of the existence of angels and of spirits†.

Where and when the fraternity of the Essenes was first formed is not clearly made out. Most probably they owed their origin to Egypt, where the Jewish refugees who fled for security after the murder of Gedaliah, were compelled, upon the captivity of the greater part of their body, to lead a recluse life, out of which this monkish institution might have grown‡. In direct contrast with the

\* The Pharisees themselves seem to have been divided on this question; hence the distinction made in the Talmuds between *Pharisæus ex amore*, and *Pharisæus ex timore*.

† Basnage, liv. ii. c. 6. and Bruckeri Hist. Crit. Phil. tom. ii. p. 716.

‡ See Brucker. lib. c. p. 762. Celibacy was enjoined upon the

Sadducees, they renounced the pomp and pleasures, and the very conveniences of life, and, retiring to caves and deserts, formed so distinct a community, as to withdraw themselves even from the customary attendance on the temple, essential as this was deemed to every true Israelite. Another point in which they stood opposed to the Sadducees, as to their speculative tenets, is, that they were unqualified fatalists<sup>a</sup>.

Their secession from the great body of the nation seems a good reason why they should not be noticed in the Gospel narratives of our Lord's ministry. They had little better claim, indeed, to be regarded as a portion of the lost sheep of the house of Israel, to which he confined his labours, than the Samaritans. It is not improbable, however, that they might have formed part of the hearers of John the Baptist, whose rude mode of life, and wanderings in the desert, were likely to attract some of them into the class of his disciples, and to make the whole body early acquainted with the offer of salvation through Christ.

The mention of this distinguished forerunner of

greater part, but not upon the whole body of the Essenes ; for even this small community had its subdivisions, or, perhaps, more properly speaking, its gradations of ascetic life. A very interesting sketch of their character and habits is given in *The Pilgrimage of Helon*.

<sup>a</sup> Joseph. Ant. lib. xiii. c. 5. and lib. xviii. c. 1. secund. ed. Hudsoni.

the Messiah suggests the propriety of some brief notice of the probable effect of his preaching, in correcting those false views which, agreeably to the foregoing remarks and statements, must have prevailed amongst the Jews. What we gather from the New Testament is, that he was employed in calling on men to repent, and in establishing clearer notions of Christ's approaching kingdom than were generally entertained. Thus his admonition to "bring forth *fruits* meet for repentance<sup>b</sup>," seems to have been addressed to the prevailing error, that an outward observance of religion was sufficient. By "the axe laid to the root of the tree<sup>c</sup>," he intimated, that the Jewish dispensation was not, as men fondly thought, to be perpetual, but was even now hastening to its fall. And lastly, his assertion that "God was able, out of the stones of the desert, to raise up children unto Abraham<sup>d</sup>," seems to point to the adoption of the Gentiles into the covenant. Add to this, that his peculiar office being to prepare the way of the Lord, it is probable that he might also have taught the application of the prophecies to a spiritual, not a temporal, Saviour.

The need of some divine messenger to prepare the way of the Lord, is indeed manifest from the foregoing sketch of the state of religion as it then

<sup>b</sup> Matt. iii. 8. Luke iii. 8.

<sup>c</sup> Matt. iii. 10. Luke iii. 9.

<sup>d</sup> Matt. iii. 9. Luke iii. 8.

existed among the Jews. Such a messenger had been useful, even supposing the Jews to have employed their dispensation aright, for it was in itself of a nature to leave their minds doubtful, and to render error, on certain points relating to the Messiah, natural and excusable. With a view to these points then, the coming of John would have been, at all events, acceptable. But he is described as coming in the spirit of Elias, who was *to restore* all things. His ministry, then, was chiefly a merciful provision, to supply (as far as was consistent with the general scheme of Providence) the deficiencies of that preparation which the Jews had failed to derive from their Law and Prophets. He came *to restore the appearance of the law*,—that mouldering and defaced image, which had been given them, to the intent that the original might be recognized when it appeared amongst men<sup>e</sup>.

The first object which the Jews were naturally led from their Scriptures to look for in the dawn

<sup>e</sup> It is to be observed, that the prophetic promise of Elijah's coming immediately follows the injunction to "remember the law of Moses."

"Remember ye the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and the judgments.

"Behold I will send you Elijah the prophet, before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord." Malachi iv. 4, 5.

It is necessary to consider these two verses as connected, in order to understand why Elijah was expected as *the restorer*.



of the Sun of righteousness, was the coming of a messenger, such as John the Baptist. But that messenger had been announced under the title of Elijah the prophet. Hence, the mistake to which they obstinately adhered, that “Elias must first come<sup>f</sup>,”—a mistake in itself natural enough, but one which the actual arrival of the messenger so strongly characterised as the Baptist was, ought to have been sufficient to remove, even before the scene was more fully opened by our Lord himself. That the claims of John should be left liable to misapprehension, or rather that they should require more than a careless, and much more than an uncandid consideration, in order to be recognized, is only in consistency with the usual tenor of God’s dealing with mankind. And it may be further observed, that while it was necessary that men should know who Christ really was, in order that the beneficial effects of his ministry might be felt, this was a point not necessary to the reaping of the fruits of the Baptist’s mission.

Their recognition of the Messiah himself would, of course, depend on their interpretation of their Scriptures, together with whatever notions they might have elsewhere derived concerning him. Of the general impression so produced, the most prominent feature, and that which operated most strongly to blind them to all his mighty works, was

<sup>f</sup> Matt. xvii. 10. and Mark ix. 11.

the opinion that he was to be a temporal Saviour. This arose, not merely from a speculative view of the Scriptures relating to him, but much more from the habit of mind wrought into them by living under a dispensation, the sanctions of which were wholly temporal. This tone of feeling was vastly increased by the severe chastisements which the nation had endured from the Babylonian captivity down to their then degraded condition, as a distant tributary of Rome. These circumstances must be viewed as falling in with the natural propensity of human hope towards "the things which are seen," in order to account for that monstrous blindness which the Jews evinced towards those passages of their Scriptures, which they acknowledged to be predictive of Christ, and which yet represented him under circumstances wholly inconsistent with temporal greatness in himself, or with temporal deliverance to be wrought for his people.

So strong was this prejudice, that the apostles themselves could not, until after the resurrection, understand how his death was consistent with his character as the Messiah. "We trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel<sup>g</sup>," was the tone of misgiving in which they spoke; and it is no unreasonable conjecture, that when Judas betrayed him to death, it was under an impression that he would be miraculously delivered

<sup>g</sup> Luke xxiv. 21.

from his enemies<sup>b</sup>. Certain it is, that not only during his life did Peter, James, and John question one with another, what the rising from the dead should mean<sup>i</sup>, but on the visit to the holy sepulchre the Evangelist expressly states, that “as yet they knew not the Scripture, that he must rise again from the dead<sup>k</sup>;” and accordingly it was the point which appears to have required more particular explanation from him in the last interview, immediately before his ascension. “Then opened he their understandings, that they might understand the Scriptures, and said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day<sup>l</sup>.” So that Christ crucified was as strictly a stumbling-block to the Jews, as it appears to have been foolishness to the Greeks.

That they should expect the Gentiles to be excluded from the immediate benefits of the Messiah’s reign, is another prejudice, the origin of which must be sought for, not merely in their mode of interpreting Scripture, but in the notions naturally imbibed by living under a theocracy. God had hitherto dealt with them, not merely as a portion of the general human race, but as his peculiar people. Now, being the only people on earth who worshipped Jehovah at all, they had never

<sup>b</sup> See Thruston’s *Night of Treason*, p. 33.

<sup>i</sup> Mark ix. 10.

<sup>k</sup> John xx. 9.

<sup>l</sup> Luke xxiv. 45, 46.

learnt to think of him distinctly as the God of all mankind, and also as the God of Israel. These two views of him became inseparably blended in their minds. They knew indeed that all the nations of the earth were to be blessed, and they doubtless understood that it was to be a common blessing with that which was reserved for themselves ; but agreeably to the above-mentioned mode of thinking, it seemed a requisite step to that object, that the nations of the earth should be incorporated with themselves by conquest, that Jerusalem should be the seat of empire, and the Messiah the universal and eternal monarch. With this prejudice, the metaphorical images emblematic of his spiritual reign were regarded as literal descriptions ; and when baffled in their attempts to render all the prophetic picture conformable to this view, they boldly adopted the suggestion that two Messiahs might be intended, the one a lowly sufferer, the other a triumphant conqueror<sup>m</sup>.

When therefore he did appear, even those whom his miracles convinced, only looked on in dim suspense for the developement of the mysterious scheme, still supposing that the preparatory step would be his assumption of temporal power. On the other hand, the bitterness with which his adver-

<sup>m</sup> Basnage, liv. iv. c. 25. sect. 10. Prideaux's Connect. p. ii. b. viii. Pocock's Commentary on Malachi ; and Calmet's Dict. under the word *Messiah*.

saries caught his hints respecting the call of the Gentiles, was not, if we consider this prejudice aright, mere national selfishness. They doubtless considered the threatened transfer of God's kingdom, as a transfer of his peculiar government to some other separate nation. Nay, it may be doubted whether their dark policy in delivering him over to the Roman governor, charged with treason, might not have arisen from this suspicion, that he was meditating a transfer of the temporal kingdom of God from them to the Romans, and intending (if indeed he were the Messiah) to assume with them his reign". The design is at least artful enough to be probable ; for the object would be, to render the Romans unfit for the intended favour, if they failed in their attempts to crucify him, and if they succeeded, their success would be a surety that he was not the Messiah. And an accidental circumstance not a little inflamed this prejudice against the extension of the promised blessing. This was the rise of the Hellenistic faction in Egypt. Party spirit was roused, and Jews at home and abroad burned with

<sup>a</sup> When he was presented with a Roman coin, and questioned respecting Cæsar, and Cæsar's rights, it might have been with a design to tempt or try him on this point. (Matt. xxii. 17.) The circumstance was alluded to in his accusation before Pilate. "We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to give tribute to Cæsar, saying that he himself is Christ a King." Luke xxiii. 2.

zeal for Jerusalem, Judæa, and whatever savoured of Judaism°.

What was likely, too, to confirm the Jews in adhering to their erroneous view of the Messiah, was a notion several times alluded to in the Gospels. Daniel had described him, in the metaphorical phrase of Prophecy, as “coming in the clouds of heaven<sup>p</sup>.” This they understood literally, and under the impression that if Jesus were indeed the Messiah he would, in fulfilment of this prophecy, exhibit himself visibly descending from the skies; they were slow to assent to the testimony of any other miracles,

° Basnage, liv. vi. c. 5. sect. 14.

<sup>p</sup> Daniel vii. 13. From our Saviour’s application of this prophecy it is generally understood to point to the destruction of Jerusalem. (See Matt. xxiv. 30. Mark xiii. 26. Luke xxi. 27.) It may be doubted however whether we are correct in assigning it to that event, so as to make it mean the coming of the Son of man in the clouds of heaven in order to take vengeance on the unbelieving city. The destruction of Jerusalem was the main *sign*, that the Son of man’s new kingdom was now completely founded, because the existence of the Jewish temple and of the Jewish polity was inconsistent with that event; and it was the establishment of this new theocracy which was expressed agreeably to the prophetic language respecting change of government, by the phrase of the new Lord coming in the clouds of heaven. The abolition of the temple service would have been the appropriate *sign* of the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven, supposing the Jews, instead of rejecting him, to have welcomed him, and not to have incurred the heavy chastisement which befel them.



but continually and perseveringly demanded of him "the sign of the Son of man in heaven<sup>a</sup>."

In reference to this point of error, again, it may be suggested, that the Jews were justified in adhering to the literal and more obvious meaning of their prophecies. But this is not the case. For, as was before observed, the form of divine communication to them was not usually literal, but conveyed in types, symbols, and metaphors. With them, therefore, a secondary meaning in a prophecy was more natural than the primary<sup>r</sup>. It should be observed too, that such a method seems in strict unison with the general character of the Mosaic dispensation, which was not so much a revelation, as a deposit of truths to be revealed; the form in which these truths were deposited, being calculated rather to mould men's minds for their reception, than positively to teach them. It was the Gospel which was to bring them to light.

That, with these perverse views, the Jewish people at large should be unfavourably disposed towards the claim of Jesus to be the Christ, is what

<sup>a</sup> Matt. xii. 38. and xvi. 1. Mark viii. 11. Luke xi. 16.

<sup>r</sup> For this, among other reasons, our Lord might have chosen to convey his instruction to them in parables and allusions. By conforming his plan of teaching thus far to the spirit of the Jewish Scriptures, he reminded them of the true character of those Scriptures, which were so composed, that the indocile and uncandid "seeing might not see, and hearing might not understand." Luke viii. 10.

might be expected. That which to us might seem most startling, most to demand doubt and hesitation, in the character of a being so wonderful, and a doctrine so spiritual, was to them possibly no ground of scruple or surprise. That God manifested himself to mankind by his Spirit, they knew from the character of their prophets, and from the record of the creation. That he should also manifest himself in the flesh, this could not have been strange or unexpected. Their familiarity with the term Immanuel<sup>s</sup>, and their acquaintance with the early mode of divine intercourse through those mysterious messengers, who at sundry times conversed with the patriarchs, must have rendered the doctrine of the Incarnation familiar and intelligible<sup>t</sup>. In Jesus the assertion of this was accounted blasphemy, not because of the doctrine, but because they did not receive him as the Messiah<sup>u</sup>.

So also with regard to the Atonement. It was obviously a notion to which their minds were long habituated. And yet it is not unlikely that the

\* To the Christian, the prophetic application of the term Immanuel to Christ seems to be (unless the mind be greatly prejudiced) an unanswerable proof of his divine nature. For if the Messiah was to be Immanuel, he could be so only in two ways, either as being so named, or as being what that name signified, i. e. "God with us." He was not called Immanuel by name, and therefore he was "God with us."

<sup>t</sup> Genesis xviii. xix. xxxii.

<sup>u</sup> Matt. xxvi. 65. Mark xiv. 64. and Luke xxii. 71.

same principle which afterwards led them to separate the suffering from the triumphant Messiah, might have blinded them to the union of the victim and the priest in one person ; and have led them to consider him whose soul was to be an offering for sin, as distinct from him who was to make intercession for the transgressors \*. One part of this doctrine, too, could not but be unacceptable to the Pharisaical party, namely, that the atonement was *one, once made, for the sins of all*. That all, even the righteous, should require this atonement, was of itself mortifying and revolting to the self-approving Pharisee ; but that all the rites and forms which typified or alluded to this act, should be pronounced henceforth null and void, deprived them of every pretence of accumulating merit by the laborious observance of them, and was perhaps to them the hardest obstacle which they had to overcome.

That the doctrine of a future state was familiar to the Jews at the period of the Advent admits of no question. It is well known to have been one of the points of controversy between the Pharisees and Sadducees ; and as the former gave the tone of opinion and faith to the people, their belief in a future state may be fairly ascribed to the nation at large. The doctrine had been gradually developed by their prophets, together with that of the Mes-

\* Isaiah liii. 10, 12.

siah's spiritual reign, of which indeed it was a necessary adjunct. Those then among the Jews, who so understood their Scriptures, as to admit the spiritual application of these latter prophecies, may be said to have seen their way far into this great secret of revelation. But the case was somewhat different with the rest, and these we know formed an exceeding great majority. For it is obvious, that to expect a temporal authority to be established, and a temporal government to be conducted, by means of eternal rewards and punishments, is incongruous and absurd; and under such a confused and disjointed view, not only did those labour who rejected Jesus, but many of those who (however much convinced that he was the Messiah) were yet so encumbered with their national prejudices, as to continue to expect from him the assumption of temporal power. So closely did the habits of the Mosaic dispensation adhere to those who had lived under it, and so great pains did it require to clear away the old incrustation, as it were, of the Law, with which Christianity had been plastered up and concealed, until it was safe to bring it forth into the light. Of all its glorious features which were then made manifest, life and immortality were the chief.

### III. RELIGION OF THE SAMARITANS.

ALTHOUGH the Samaritans claimed for themselves all the privileges of the Mosaic covenant, yet our Saviour in his first mission of the apostles distinguishes these from "the lost sheep of the house of Israel<sup>y</sup>," and, it may be added, from the Gentiles also. Accordingly, if we look to the accounts which are given of their origin and of the nature of their faith, we shall find religion amongst them assuming a somewhat different character from that under which it has appeared, either in the Jewish or in the Gentile world. With the Jews it was revelation neglected, with the Gentiles it was revelation perverted, with the Samaritans it was revelation corrupted.

Their origin and the history of their faith is this<sup>z</sup>. When the king of Assyria carried away the ten tribes into captivity, he re peopled Samaria with colonists drawn from various parts of his dominions. The new settlement becoming infested by wild beasts, the calamity was attributed to the wrath of the neglected God of Israel; and accordingly, on the application of the colonists, one of the captive priests was sent from Assyria "to teach them how to fear the Lord." Thus was the knowledge of Jehovah introduced among them, although, in the

<sup>y</sup> Matt. x. 6. and xv. 24.

<sup>z</sup> 2 Kings xvii. Joseph. Antiq. lib. ix. cap. ultim.

first instance at least, they could only have regarded him as the tutelary deity of the land, whom it was incumbent on them to associate with the former objects of their worship. Nor is it likely that their views would be greatly corrected or improved by the continual accession of Jewish refugees to their community; these being for the most part criminals, outcasts, the very refuse of the people<sup>a</sup>.

Under all these disadvantages, the true faith must nevertheless have been gaining ground amongst them, for we find them at a subsequent period anxious to become incorporated with the Jews, so as to form one people and one Church. Sanballat their governor sought to bring this about, by giving his daughter in marriage to Manasses, brother to Jaddus the Jewish high priest. But the Jews could not brook the union. Manasses was forced into banishment, and with him went a numerous train of adherents into Samaria. The benefit which must have accrued to the Samaritan religion from this event is obvious. The immediate result was the erection of an independent temple on mount Gerizim, and the more orderly observance of that which they maintained to be the pure Mosaic law; because on the writings of Moses alone did they found their faith and their practice<sup>b</sup>.

<sup>a</sup> Josephi Ant. lib. xi. c. 8. in fin.

<sup>b</sup> Ibid. c. 7, 8.



Still, it would appear from our Lord's interview with the woman of Sychar, that if at that period idolatry was no longer practised among them, there was some gross error in their conception of the supreme Being, probably the remains of their heathen prejudice respecting the local character of a deity. The Evangelist's narrative might of itself perhaps lead us to this conclusion, for the remark of the woman, which occasioned Christ's censure of the Samaritan creed, may be fairly interpreted, as implying, that God was not omnipresent, at least, not equally the object of worship every where<sup>c</sup>. Her argument seems to be, that Jerusalem could not be the place for men to worship Jehovah, because the patriarchs had worshipped him on mount Gerizim; his presence having been sought for by the patriarchs on that mountain, how could he consistently be claimed as the God of Jerusalem? Hence the tenor of our Lord's reply, "Ye shall neither in this place, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father." "God is a Spirit," and "they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." Other equally false and unworthy tenets have been ascribed to the Samaritans; and although our information on the subject, being chiefly derived from Jewish authority, must be received with due allowance, yet there can be little doubt that their creed was deeply tinctured with the wild

<sup>c</sup> John iv. 20.

fancies of the Platonic school of Alexandria. Among the individuals who contributed to this, the most noted was that Simon of whom mention is made in the Acts of the Apostles<sup>d</sup>. According to the early Christian writers<sup>e</sup>, he is said to have studied magic and philosophy, and by these means to have obtained credit in his native country Samaria, for the most preposterous pretensions. St. Luke's account is, that "he bewitched the people, giving out that he was some great one," and that the people called him "the great power of God." This looks very like an allusion to the doctrine of emanations. Simon was no doubt practising on the credulity of his countrymen, and had persuaded them to regard him as one of those superior *Æons* or eternal natures, which are described in the philosophical jargon as subsisting within the fulness of the Divine essence.

And yet, whatever were the deficiencies or the mistakes of the Samaritan creed, to them, and not to the Jews, we know the Messiah vouchsafed, in express terms, to declare who he was. Both Jews and Samaritans were anxiously expecting him: but it is plain, that the expectation of the Samaritans was widely different from that of the Jews; for when the inhabitants of Sychar thronged forth at

<sup>d</sup> Ch. viii. 9.

<sup>e</sup> Justin Martyr, Apol. ii. 69, 91. Irenæi Hær. lib. i. c. 23. and Clementis Recognit. lib. ii.

the woman's summons, to gaze on him who was reported as fulfilling the prophetic marks of the Christ, they were neither surprised nor offended, at meeting with no greater personage than a lowly traveller, seated beside Jacob's well, and asking for a draught of water. The grounds of this difference form the most interesting point of the inquiry concerning the religion of the Samaritans; and to the superior clearness and correctness of their notions it was doubtless owing, that they were favoured with this more explicit avowal of himself by the Messiah, and were otherwise noticed by him in the course of his ministry.

Amongst the heresies of the Samaritans was their rejection of all the Scriptures save the Pentateuch<sup>f</sup>, so that if their expectation was founded solely on the Scripture prophecies, to the Pentateuch we must look for the ground-work of their faith. Now, whoever will run through these early promises of a Saviour, will perceive that the most prominent feature in them, as far as regards the objects of the blessing, is, that all the nations of the earth shall be partakers of it<sup>g</sup>. It was the extension of the blessing then to all nations which formed the essential feature in their expectation, as distinguished from that of the Jews. Of spurious descent, and having now failed to identify their case with that of their

<sup>f</sup> See Appendix, [E.]

<sup>g</sup> See especially Gen. xii. 3. xviii. 18. xxii. 18. xxvi. 4. xxviii. 14.

rivals, they had not like them any prejudices to obstruct the ready admission of this great truth. Indeed, their unsuccessful rivalry with the Jews, might be supposed to have rendered them more sharp-sighted, in eliciting what to them was a consolatory view of the prophecies.

Now this being the point, which beyond all others formed the greatest obstacle to the reception of the Messiah by his own people, it is not to be wondered at, that with a view to this the Samaritans should receive some particular notice from our Lord. In like manner then, as upon St. Peter's confession, he declared himself to that apostle; so upon the Samaritan woman's avowal of the nature of her country's hope, to her also he made a similar declaration. With the same view perhaps he proposed to the Jews an example of a Samaritan as contrasted with a Levite; the former acting from a principle that all men are brethren, the latter devoid of fellow-feeling, and refusing to extend his charity to the wayfaring stranger, though he were perishing for want of it<sup>h</sup>. We are the more authorized to make such an application of the parable, from the *unneighbourly* character of the Samaritans, who appear to have indulged toward the Jews even more than an equal share of jealousy and hatred. It was only in their view of the promised blessing that they were less selfish and uncharitable, and,

<sup>h</sup> Luke x. 32.

unlike the Jews, willing that all who needed, enemy or friend, stranger or fellow-countryman, should be free partakers of it. Supposing then that the Jews understood the parable to allude to their unnatural denial of the greatest of God's blessings to him who was perishing in the highways for want of it<sup>u</sup>, the reproof which they would read, might be thus interpreted, "If the Samaritans, using the light to be derived from a portion only of your Scriptures, have been able to see this great truth, how shall you stand excused on the score of ignorance, who profess to receive the whole volume of the book?"

Thus much on the supposition, that the Samaritan expectation was derived solely from the Jewish Scriptures. But if (as has been stated to be the opinion of some) the general expectation of the

<sup>u</sup> Elsewhere our Lord designates the Gentiles as persons in need, found in the highways and hedges. (Luke xiv. 23.) Any one accustomed to observe the recurrence of the same doctrine under different forms, in the various discourses of our Lord, will not perhaps be unwilling to admit the connection in this instance. Scarcely any thing of importance is said by him, which we do not find again and again expressed or alluded to, so as to connect the former mention of the subject with the introduction of it in some fresh shape. This deserves the more notice, because beyond the ordinary advantage of renewing the impression of truth on men's minds, it was a method especially appropriate to one who taught in parables, and whose meaning (without some check of that kind) might have been, even on matters of importance, liable to be perverted or misunderstood, or at least a plea would have been furnished for perversion and misapprehension.

heathen world had some origin independent of this, it is but natural to conjecture further, that those who were by descent almost altogether heathen, would not have been excluded from these sources of traditionary prophecy enjoyed by the rest of the Gentiles ; and that their knowledge of these might have helped them to a clearer exposition of the Jewish record than the Jews themselves generally adopted<sup>a</sup>.

Before I quit the subject altogether, it may be proper to notice an apparent inconsistency in the Gospel narrative of the Samaritans' behaviour towards Christ. When as yet he had performed no miracles, and merely for his word's sake, one whole city declared themselves satisfied of the truth of his claims, and yet, as those claims came to be more

<sup>a</sup> The Samaritans might easily have become acquainted with "the fulness of the time" from the Pentateuch, marked as it there is by Jacob's prophecy of the departure of the sceptre from Judah, a circumstance to which they would most anxiously advert. Bishop Horsley supposes that, besides the agreement of time, the character under which the Messiah presented himself to them as a preacher of righteousness was precisely that under which the writings of Moses would lead them to expect him. The passages which he conjectures to have furnished this view, are those which record the promises to Jacob, (Gen. xxviii. 3. xxxv. 11. xlviii. 4. and the song of Moses, Deuteron. xxxiii. 2—5.) His argument however requires that the text of the latter should undergo no slight alteration, and even the former texts, as they now stand, will scarcely be allowed by all to warrant his application of them. See Horsley's Sermons, vol. ii. serm. 24—26.



certainly proved, we find the Samaritans laying aside in this one point their opposition to the Jews, and so averse to receive him, as to provoke his disciples on one occasion to ask of him if he would call down fire from heaven to consume them<sup>o</sup>. But the reason of this is easily found in the rule which our Saviour laid down for the limits of his ministry, "I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel." "Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans go not. But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel<sup>p</sup>." This doubtless seemed to them a sanction of the Jewish prejudice, that to them alone, and for their sake only, was the Messiah come. On the occasion above alluded to, the reason given for their refusal to receive him is, that "his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem." They were mortified, disappointed, and perplexed; and the more so because of their enmity to the Jews. Hence for a season their clearer faith failed them; but as soon as Christianity began to be preached beyond the Jewish nation, they were foremost and readiest to embrace it. When Philip preached, they with one accord gave heed to him<sup>q</sup>: and meanwhile, individuals, such as the grateful leper<sup>r</sup>, might through-

<sup>o</sup> Luke ix. 51.

<sup>p</sup> Matt. xv. 24. x. 5, 6.

<sup>q</sup> Acts viii. 6.

<sup>r</sup> Luke xvii. 15.

out have been waiting patiently for the arrival of of the promised period, notwithstanding the general perverseness and inconsistency<sup>s</sup>.

<sup>s</sup> See Appendix, [F.]

A  
**REVIEW**  
OF THE  
RISE AND EARLY PROGRESS  
OF  
**CHRISTIANITY.**

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**PART I.**  
**THE MINISTRY OF CHRIST.**

**THE** period which will pass under review in the following inquiry, embraces the three great stages in the establishment of Christianity. In the first, it was taught by our Saviour himself on earth ; in the second, it was entrusted to the ministry of men divinely inspired and extraordinarily assisted ; in the last, it was permanently placed in the hands of governors and teachers neither divinely inspired nor extraordinarily assisted.

There are several remarkable omissions in our Lord's personal Ministry, such as that he never baptized, although baptism was the rite of admission into his religion ; that he did not preach to the Gentiles, although the most distinguishing feature of the new dispensation was its extension to all mankind ; that he established no Church during

his abode on earth, and left no written laws behind him : all which seem to indicate, (what the Gospel account of him more expressly declares,) that he came to be the *subject* of Christianity more than the *author* of it. In the former view, he appears as God manifested in the flesh, and in that character accomplishing our redemption by his mysterious sufferings and death. In the latter, he appears as the teacher of mankind, instructing them in the method whereby they might attain to the divine favour thus made accessible to all. His ministry so considered may be conveniently classed under the following heads :

I. His ordinary life, considered in the light of an Example.

II. His Teaching.

III. His Miracles.

IV. His Institutions.

V. His Prophecies.

This view will not include a detailed account of the events of his life, obviously because the Bible is in the hands of all. A familiarity with them is presumed, and on this presumption they will be introduced or alluded to, not in the way of narrative, but as they fall under the several divisions into which the subject has been arranged<sup>a</sup>.

<sup>a</sup> In the mode of considering Christ's Ministry which has been here adopted, the question of its duration, and also the chrono-

## I. EXAMPLE OF CHRIST.

THE importance of example and precept united in the same person is obvious, and consists in the learner being at once impressed with a conviction

logical arrangement of its several parts, are necessarily excluded. On the former point, namely, the period which it embraced, there is now perhaps little difference of opinion, at least controversy has been long silent on the subject. But few questions historical or doctrinal have been more frequently renewed from the earliest period of the Church. It is quite marvellous too, to find the immense difference of time ascribed to our Lord's Ministry among those who differed concerning the point in the period nearest the source of information. Tertullian<sup>a</sup> and Origen<sup>b</sup> have been supposed to fix it, the one within the compass of a year, the other a little beyond it; whilst Irenæus seems to assert a period of twenty years. The subject has been discussed by Bp. Marsh in his notes to Michaelis with his usual learning and judgment. See vol. iii. c. ii. sect. 7. notes.

Bp. Kaye, in his *Eccl. Hist.* p. 158. attributes Tertullian's statement to a mistake of the year in which Christ was revealed, for the year in which he suffered. See also Benson's *Chronology of our Saviour's Life*, c. vii. page 241.

The arrangement of the several portions of Christ's Ministry by Archbishop Newcome in his *Harmony*, is perhaps as probable as can be suggested. The events of the Resurrection are those to the right disposition of which the most importance attaches, and it is on this part of the subject that most difficulty is likely to be felt. West on the Resurrection is too popular a book to require any reference to be made to it, as containing the ablest solution of the apparent inconsistencies which the Gospel narrative presents, but like Dr. Less's work on the *Authenticity of the Scriptures*, it derives a value from one circumstance, which cannot be too often brought into notice; it was the result of real doubt and scepticism.

<sup>a</sup> Adv. Judæos, c. 8.

<sup>b</sup> *Περὶ ἀρχῶν*, lib. iv. c. 5.

that the teacher is sincere and his precept practicable, and being furnished with a pattern to excite and guide him in the practice of it. If, added to this, the same person be moreover the source of that object, on account of which the rules enjoined are valuable, the combined effect is of course considerably heightened.

That the divine commandments, as delivered to mankind before the incarnation of the Son of God, laboured under a disadvantage, arising from the want of such an example, cannot be questioned. The disciple of the old dispensation, was circumstanced like the tyro, who has to learn an art from written rules, for want of a master to practise under. To obviate this disadvantage, it was necessary that the commands should be more numerous, more minute and specific, and more literally enforced. Still, in some points, it would seem impossible, that any mode of instruction should produce a similar effect, to that which has resulted from the great Christian mystery. He, for instance, whom we have never seen nor conceived in thought, cannot become an object of the affections, in the same manner as he with whom we are familiar. The command to love the Lord our God with all our heart, and all our soul, and all our strength, could never effect the same purpose, as God manifested in the flesh, so as to become the natural object of sympathy, of love, and of gratitude.

On this principle doubtless it is, that the resur-



rection of Christ is so much insisted on as an earnest of our own resurrection. Not that the same truth would have admitted of a doubt, if only a declaration of it had been made by our Lord or the Holy Spirit; nor, again, that other proofs of his ability to raise us would not have sufficed; but it was a sample of the general resurrection, “the first fruits of them that slept<sup>b</sup> :” and a truth so experimentally proved, differs as much in its effect on the belief and feelings, as mere precept differs from example, or rather as the effect of precept, disjoined from the example of him on whose authority it rests, differs from the effect of precept, example, and authority, united in the same person.

For this end also the chastisement of our sins may have been exhibited in the person of a suffering Redeemer. For it is evident, that (for ought we know) the redemption of mankind might have been effected, and the scene neither exhibited nor revealed to men. As it is, we feel the force of St. Paul’s appeal, “He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things<sup>c</sup>?”

Jesus Christ is set forth by the sacred writers as the perfect pattern of Christian duty. By which we must understand, not that he fulfilled all the duties which a Christian life may embrace, but all which were within his sphere of action. It is per-

<sup>b</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 26.      <sup>c</sup> Rom. viii. 32.

fection in the *mode*, rather than in the extent which it embraces. It will nevertheless be found, on a very little reflection, to be extensive enough to furnish a model for the chief part of every man's life, and to be applicable in many points, which would appear at first to lie beyond its compass. Thus, as a worker of miracles, his example cannot indeed be literally imitated, but it may still be adapted to the case of all. The same benevolence which was evinced in the exercise of divine means by him, may be testified in our behaviour, by the use of human means conducive to the same purpose. We cannot, indeed, redeem a world by the sacrifice of our lives, but many sacrifices and personal denials there are which conduce to the welfare of others, and in making these we shall be acting like our great example. We cannot save men's souls, but we may help them into the way of salvation; and although we have no power to ascend to heaven by any efforts of our own, by looking stedfastly on Him who has gone before us, we may kindle that hope, and that faith, whereby we shall ascend to heaven like Him.

Again, there are relations of domestic and public life out of which duties arise, such as the Saviour cannot be literally said to have fulfilled, because he stood not in those relations, and had no opportunity of exemplifying the practice of the duties. We cannot contemplate him as a father and master of a household, but we see him in the bosom of his

apostolic family,—those whom, as if with this design, he calls his mother and his brethren<sup>d</sup>; and what example could more forcibly recommend the observance of family prayer, for instance, than that which he has so exhibited, by adding to his solitary devotions, and to his attendance on the public service of the synagogue, the custom of praying in private with his disciples<sup>e</sup>?

If we consider the sphere of life in which our Lord moved, it will be seen that although his example thus became applicable to many cases strictly beyond it, yet it was more particularly suited to the exercise of those moral duties which are peculiar to the Christian scheme, viz. humility and forgiveness of injuries. The propriety and advantage of this is obvious. To the heathen moralist these qualities, considered as virtues, were as new as the doctrines of the Atonement and the Resurrection. To the Jew, the latter at least was equally so; and both required that the practice of them should be recommended by a life such as the Saviour led, in which his condescension in dwelling amongst us was more apparent from his poverty and lowliness, than if he had been numbered with the rich and powerful; whilst his every act of mercy, and his every word of exhortation to the Jews, was a return of good for evil. The closing scene of his ministry was only

<sup>d</sup> Matt. xii. 49.

<sup>e</sup> Matt. xxvi. 26. Luke vi. 12. and Luke ix. 28. Matt. vi. 9

a more prominent display of those Gospel virtues exemplified in the whole course of it. He submitted voluntarily to a death appropriated to the meanest criminals, and he died praying for his enemies.

## II. HIS TEACHING.

As to his mode of teaching, it was not systematic; and in this his example was imitated by the apostles. The language and form in which it was delivered was unphilosophical; that is, instead of employing terms of science, he formed his expressions from passing occurrences, and whatever objects happened to be present to his hearers at the time of his addressing them. Or else he spoke in parables, or made use of that ancient symbolical language so often adopted by the Jewish prophets, as, when he washed his disciples' feet, and set a child in the midst of them<sup>f</sup>.

Whatever be assigned as the probable motive which occasioned our Lord to choose this unphilosophical and unsystematic mode of instruction, it is highly important that the fact should be clearly kept in view by the Christian who searches the New Testament for the great doctrines of Christianity. Without doing so, he cannot fail to be surprised, and somewhat confounded, at finding these

<sup>f</sup> John xiii. 5. Matt. xviii. 2.

doctrines, neither arranged in order, nor often directly asserted, but lying in detached portions, each difficult perhaps to be found entire, but easily produced by combining one passage with another.

As by this method it often happens, that one portion of the doctrine sought for will be found in the Old Testament, another in the New, the connection and unity of the two dispensations, of which they are the several records, become the more apparent, and this might have been one end contemplated by our Lord in adopting it. It entailed on the disciple of the Gospel the necessity of searching the earlier Scriptures for the words of eternal life.

A further advantage accrues from it to the evidence of Christianity. Its doctrines being thus diffused and intermingled with other matter, could not by any possibility have been so forged and inserted, as to leave no occasional mark of *seaming* and *joining*. Our Saviour's Gospel is like his robe, "without seam, woven throughout," and he who receives it, must take it all, for it cannot be divided.

As to the *matter* of his teaching, his discourses aim either at correcting what was perverted, and explaining what was obscure, in the preceding state of morals and religious knowledge, or else they declare truths not before revealed. With the several leading topics which they embrace, the Christian reader is presumed to be familiar; and it is sufficient

to observe briefly, that of the former kind are his exhortations to *inward purity*, as opposed to mere outward acts of obedience, and compliance with the spirit rather than with the letter of the precept. To the latter class belong the doctrines of Atonement and Grace ; of the Trinity in Unity ; certain points of revelation relating to a future state ; and whatever else may be considered as peculiar to the Christian revelation.

### III. HIS MIRACLES.

THE chief object of our Lord's miracles was to prove his mission ; and it may be observed, that in this case, and in that of Moses, (of all who ever pretended to found a religion on them,) the miracles supported the credit of the religion, not the religion the credit of the miracles. As testimony, however, they do not properly form part of his ministry, (as a teacher,) but they have likewise a moral and a religious meaning, and in this point of view they do so.

They have a moral meaning, because they are all benevolent, whereas as *proofs* they might have been destructive or indifferent, as were the miracles of Moses and the Prophets. As it is, they not only prove that Christ came from God, but declare that he came with a benevolent purpose.



They have also a religious meaning, because they typified some of the chief doctrines of his Gospel. Thus when he converted into wine the water set for purification, he taught that sin was cleansed by his blood, and not by the ritual observances of the law. His divine nature was asserted by walking on the sea<sup>g</sup>, and by whatever other miracles invested him with the scriptural characteristics of Jehovah. When he healed the sick, gave sight to the blind, and enabled the lame to walk, he not only proved his authority, and exercised his compassion, but suggested the inference, that he had come to restore our corrupted nature to its original purity, to enlighten the ignorant, as all men were, and to enable us to stand in the path of life, when without him we could not but fail and sink. And lastly, to shew that the good effects of his coming were to extend to distant countries and future ages, the objects of his miracles were occasionally persons who only touched him, or who were absent from him.

Hence possibly the necessity of faith in the persons on whom the miracles of healing were wrought; for if these miracles had no further intent than to prove his power, or even his benevolence, it is obvious that he, to whom were committed all things

<sup>g</sup> "Thy way is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters."  
Psalm lxxvii. 19.

"The Lord is mightier than mighty waves." Psalm xciii. 4.

in heaven and in earth, did not need the concurrence of any object of power or of benevolence. But as he had made Faith necessary to that eternal salvation which he came to offer, it was fitting that the temporal deliverance should in like manner be offered with the same condition, if we suppose the latter to be intended as a type of the former ; else the symbolical lesson would have been incomplete, and liable to misconstruction.

One observation more on our Lord's miracles. They were not only *proofs* of his authority, and means of instruction, but also specimens of that mercy, the full and entire display of which is reserved for hereafter.

To understand this, it must be borne in mind, that Satan brought into the world both sin and death, moral and natural evil ; and the result of our Lord's triumph over him was to be the removal of both. In healing the sick, then, and raising the dead, the Saviour may be considered as giving an instance of the exercise of his power in removing *natural evil* ; whilst the same was evinced with regard to *moral evil*, by casting out devils, the agents of him who was the source of sin. It was doubtless in reference to this latter object, that he caused them on one occasion to depart into a herd of swine, thus proving that the possession was real, and not the result of a disordered imagination. The same end might have been likewise contem-

plated in the record of the Temptation ; for in neither of these instances at least could the power of imagination account for the phenomenon. In the first the divine being was above its delusions, in the other the brute was as much below it<sup>h</sup>.

#### IV. HIS INSTITUTIONS.

In the first rude state of language, signs, gestures, and actions were no doubt the chief mode of expressing all ideas. But in religion, custom being more sacred than in the ordinary intercourse of life, the primitive vehicle of thought continued here longest in use, and was still the chief form of worship for ages after language became more intelligible than signs and symbols. In proof of this, we may observe how large a proportion of the latter was preserved in the religious service of the Israelites.

As the progress of language advanced, the primitive usage gradually declined, and in the last establishment of religion, only two symbolical institutions were appointed, Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

These, then, we might expect to find expressing the most important truths of that last revelation, in a form intelligible to the savage as well as to the philosopher, to men of all languages, and in all

<sup>h</sup> Warburton's *Divine Legation*, b. ix. c. 5.

ages; and that such is the instruction which they convey is obvious. The great topics of our Lord's preaching were repentance and faith. The promised result of repentance was, that men were to be freed from the influence of sinful habits. This, in metaphorical language, would be a cleansing from sin, and in embodied metaphor or symbol, the act of washing. Again, the promised result of faith was forgiveness of sins through the atonement to be made by his death, and also miraculous assistance from him, and this is set forth by the bread and wine in the Eucharist. The symbol is twofold. The bread is broken, and the wine poured out, to denote his dying for us; the bread is also eaten, and the wine drunk, to denote the spiritual strength and refreshment, the life, which we derive from his mysterious presence and union with us.

But why not, it may be said, in this latter, as in the former sacrament, adopt the most direct and exact representation of the scene so recorded, such as would be the flesh and blood of an animal? The case appears to be this: the atonement was so represented before the event took place, because a greater exactness was requisite to render the agreement of the event with its type so apparent as to be easily recognized and admitted; but so close a resemblance not being necessary in a commemorative symbol, (the event being already known, and the connection between them admitted,) that symbol was changed, to prevent any confusion between the

old rite, which was prophetic, and the new one, which was commemorative; between the Jewish sacrifice, which had no independent and inherent efficacy, and the Christian sacrifice which possessed it.

Christ instituted both these sacraments, and no more than these, yet it is remarkable that he officiated only in the holy Supper. A distinction which, considering the importance he attached to both, can hardly be supposed to have been accidental. Indeed a design of making the distinction, (whatever that design was) may perhaps be perceived in several of his parables, and still more in that most allegorical of all his miracles, the conversion of water into wine. The water *when made wine*, was then, and not till then, placed into the hands of the governor of the feast to be dispensed<sup>1</sup>.

That our Lord foresaw the impious notion which would creep into his Church respecting the nature of the bread and wine administered in the Eucharist, and officiated himself to render its absurdity more palpable; but that in Baptism there being no occasion for a similar precaution, he therefore did not officiate in that also, is by no means improbable. But the distinction may also have arisen from the nature of the things signified by the two Sacraments. They being, as it were, an epitome of the Christian scheme; Baptism represents the agency of the

<sup>1</sup> John ii. 8.

Comforter, the Eucharist the agency of the Son. The admission into Christ's Church was the work, not of the Lord himself, but of his disciples filled with the Holy Ghost, and the ceremony of that admission was Baptism. But the redemption of those so admitted was the work of Christ, and of this the Eucharist was a symbolical pledge. By Baptism we are said to be sealed unto the day of redemption, and we are baptized into his death<sup>k</sup>.

Besides these institutions, our Lord appointed one form of prayer, which (beyond its obvious character as a model and a sanction for other forms) may not unreasonably be viewed in connection with the Sacraments, as uniting with them to form a peculiar illustration and testimony to the doctrine of the Trinity. One form of prayer was appointed, and that addressed to the Father; one Sacrament was instituted declaring the office of the Son; one more declaring the office of the Holy Ghost.

## V. HIS PROPHECIES.

A prophecy is a miracle performed for posterity, and to our Lord's prophecies the same observation applies as to his miracles. One intent of them was to prove the truth of his mission: "Now I tell you before it come, that when it is come to pass ye may believe that I am he<sup>l</sup>." So considered, the

<sup>k</sup> Eph. iv. 30. Rom. vi. 3.

<sup>l</sup> John xiii. 19. xiv. 29.



prophecies are not, strictly speaking, a portion of his ministry. But, like his miracles, they were also the vehicles of instruction, and this view of them falls under the present subject of remark. They may be conveniently arranged under four heads, as treating,

1. Of Himself.
2. Of his Church or Religion.
3. Of certain individuals of his Church.
4. Of the Jewish Church or Religion.

#### I. CONCERNING HIMSELF.

Christ, in delivering prophecies concerning himself, may be considered as employed in framing an index to the work which he had in hand. It is natural to suppose, that those points which he thus selected, were by him considered as the leading features of it; and were selected in order to direct attention to them especially, and above all others.

Accordingly he foretold his betrayal, his death, his resurrection, his ascension, and his second coming. Now if he had merely marked these for special notice by the finger of prophecy, and left the doctrines arising out of them to be gathered from other parts of his own discourses, or from the preaching and writings of his inspired servants, (as is the case to a certain extent,) still, to these doctrines would belong a character of importance,

corresponding to that bestowed on the events by his notice of them. But his prophecies are frequently not only predictive, but explanatory; declaring at once the event to be, and the meaning and intent of it. Thus, in foretelling his death, the prediction conveys also the doctrine of the Atonement. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up, *that* whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life<sup>m</sup>." "I am the good Shepherd, the good Shepherd giveth his life *for the sheep*<sup>n</sup>." These and similar predictions then, when accomplished, became a commentary on the events. As in the first mentioned, for instance, when he was seen lifted up on the cross, there could be no doubt that by this means it was effected, that "whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life."

## II. CONCERNING HIS CHURCH.

A didactic character may also be traced in the prophecies relating to his Church or Kingdom on earth. Viewed as the display of foreknowledge, they are, like other prophecies, only miracles in reserve, the germ of evidence which time was to unfold and bring to maturity. But the application

<sup>m</sup> John iii. 14, 15.

<sup>n</sup> John x. 11.

of these prophecies to a specific purpose of instruction, is the circumstance which entitles them to be considered as part of the Saviour's ministry. It is said that "holy men" of old spake not of themselves, but as "the Holy Spirit moved them°." Not so our Lord. He was not the instrument of prophecy, but prophecy was an instrument in his hands, employed at his discretion, and so employed as to make a part of his didactic ministry.

Speaking of his Church, he sometimes alludes to it as already established; sometimes he points to the process by which that object was to be accomplished. Of the former subject, the leading topic was, that his Church was to embrace within its pale all the world. Contrasted with its origin, it was as the stately tree compared with the seed from which it sprang; and as a little leaven leaveneth the whole mass, even so his little family of believers were to impart the gift which they had received from him, not to any one favoured people or sect, but to all nations. Occasionally, too, his Church is represented as a field in which tares had sprung up, or by images of a like import.

Now, keeping all this in view, let us call to mind how much the early progress of the Gospel was impeded by the Jewish prejudices respecting the nature of a divine dispensation, which even those who were converts to Christianity could not con-

° 2 Peter i. 21.

ceive to be a thing intended alike for Gentile and Jew. The ideas of a divine dispensation and of a chosen people were nearly inseparable. What then could be more appropriate and useful, than that our Lord's prophecies concerning his Church should point chiefly to its universality? In this point of view they were instruction, reproof, and prevention of error.

Again, the prophecies relating to the establishing of his Church, are full of the difficulties and distresses which awaited those who were employed in this work. The very assurance, that the gates of hell should not prevail against the fabric which they were appointed to rear, is an implied declaration of extreme peril to be expected; as the promise that he would be with them always, denotes that they should always need him. Of what use now could this view of the matter be to his followers in their arduous enterprise? that is, of what use, beyond the evidence arising from the fulfilment of prophecy? It was, doubtless, no small consolation to them, to know that their Master had foreseen all their difficulties, and provided against them. But there appears also a further design. Under the Mosaic dispensation, men had imbibed two prejudices which were inconsistent with the new covenant: the one, that all divine revelation was confined to a particular people; the other, that God's people were to expect from him temporal rewards and punishments. As the former notion was counteracted by the prophecies

relating to the universality of the Gospel, so the latter was to be corrected, by presenting to their minds continual warnings of persecution, hardship, and death. Agreeably to the doctrine of temporal rewards and punishments, the Jews had looked for a Messiah who should confer on his followers worldly glory and prosperity; but these earthly motives to obedience were henceforth to be cast out of religion, and the prophecies in question were placed as a guard to prevent their re-entrance.

It is probable then that the Saviour's prophecies relating to his Church, considered as part of his didactic ministry, were designed principally to correct the erroneous notion, that that Church was to be established on the same principles as the Jewish dispensation which it was to supersede.

### III. CONCERNING CERTAIN INDIVIDUALS.

#### *St. Peter.*

Three prophecies relating to St. Peter are recorded in the Gospels. Of these the most important will be first considered.

“Thou art Peter, and upon this rock will I build my Church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven;

and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven<sup>p</sup>."

As we have no clue to any connection between this saying and any future supremacy vested in the apostle because of it, it is to be considered as a prophecy of the part he was to occupy, rather than an appointment; and as such its didactic character will be here examined.

By many indeed the words are understood as having no peculiar reference to St. Peter; or rather, as declaring no more concerning him than is elsewhere declared of the other apostles. And, indeed, if Peter had been the apostle's original name, and not applied to him by our Lord himself, as if on account of some peculiarity in his character or condition, it might be fairly argued, that our Lord's language to him only differed from that which he addressed to the others, in being an allusion to his name. But the name was obviously given him because of his future destination, not that destination so expressed because of the name. Bishop Marsh<sup>q</sup>, accordingly, has applied the prophecy to him viewed as the founder of the Church at Jerusalem, which was, as he contends, more peculiarly the Church of Christ. His argument certainly rests upon the surest ground, the result. St. Peter was not the founder of an Universal Church, but of the Church at Jerusalem.

<sup>p</sup> Matt. xvi. 18, 19.

<sup>q</sup> See Comparative View, App. p. 23.



The images of which the prophecy is composed are a rock—a church built on it—the keys of it—and the gates of hell. At least, these are all the images contained in that portion of the prophecy which was addressed to St. Peter, and to none else. Now, whatever meaning we choose to elicit from them, it will hardly be denied, on a moment's consideration, that they were amongst the most familiar to Jewish ears, because amongst the most common of their scriptural figures. Secondly, that they apply in their literal signification most remarkably to the Jewish temple, its situation, and other circumstances. Built on a rock—the one Church of God heretofore, and its keys the badge of authority to him who held them—that Church was now given over to the gates of Hades, and the Christian Church was to be established instead.

Accordingly in this prophecy, concerning the founder of the new Church at Jerusalem, our Lord has crowded together some of the most familiar Jewish images, and those of a kind calculated to recal the ancient temple to men's minds. Now, however obscure his language might become to others, by reason of this assemblage of national figures, to the Jews it would on that very account be the more explicit, and they would the more readily recognize its particular application to them. We hear of no doubts originating in these words, as to St. Peter's rank and authority—of no question, in short, about the meaning, being agitated in the

early Church. When St. Peter took on him the ministry of the circumcision, and still more on his first preaching at Jerusalem, the converted Jew remembered the words of the Lord Jesus, and understood that the former temple was now consigned to destruction, and the new one in the hands of him who bore the office designated by the keys.

One remark may be added in further illustration of this prophecy, which, from its misapplication, has assumed an importance, beyond any which would attach to it from its natural character. The amazing size of the stones employed, both in the foundation and the superstructure of the temple, was a subject of general admiration<sup>r</sup>. Accordingly the disciples are said, on one occasion, to have pointed them out to our Lord, with some degree of national vanity: “ Master, see what manner of *stones*, and what *buildings* are here ; and Jesus answered, and said unto them, Seest thou these great *buildings* ? there shall not be left one stone upon another which shall not be thrown down\*.” Now after this read the prophecy in question, and it will seem nearly in so many words a negation concerning St. Peter’s Church, of that fate which was affirmed of the temple and its service. In St. Mark’s account,

<sup>r</sup> See Josephus’s description, *De Bello Jud.* lib. v. c. 5.

\* Mark xiii. 2.

(which is the one quoted,) it is said that *one of the disciples* made the remark, and as St. Peter's name is afterwards first mentioned amongst those who made further inquiries respecting the overthrow of the sacred edifice, it is rather probable that he was the one. Perhaps, then, our Saviour might have been calling to his remembrance this conversation, (for it seems at the time to have excited no ordinary interest,) when he told him that not such should be the materials, nor such the fate of the new house of God at Jerusalem. The apostle had just acknowledged him as the Son of the living God, and our Lord's reply was as if he had said, "Simon, thou didst heretofore extol the temple and its foundation rock, but in Jerusalem shall be built a nobler edifice, not by a Moses, an Elias, or any mere prophet, but by him whom thou hast discovered to be the Son of the living God. And thou shalt find thyself a firmer foundation-stone to that building, than those of which thou didst once boast unto me<sup>1</sup>."

<sup>1</sup> The reader may here require to be reminded of the remark already made on the recurrence of the same topics in the various discourses of our Lord.

But, after all, the Protestant advocate need not be very solicitous about settling the precise import of the promise to St. Peter; that is, as far as it affects the controversy between Protestants and Papists; for, whatever kind of *foundation* St. Peter was to the Church, it is obvious that the image employed in the metaphor excludes the notion of a *succession of persons similarly circumstanced*.

The two remaining prophecies concerning St. Peter appear to have been intended as instructive, chiefly, if not solely, to the individual. That which foretold his denial of his Master conveyed a rebuke for self-confidence, whilst that which described his ignominious death, was peculiarly applicable to him, who, of all the apostles, expressed the greatest solicitude about the temporal kingdom attributed to the Messiah.

*St. John.*

“ If this man tarry till I come, what is that to thee <sup>u</sup>.”

What was affirmed in these words concerning St. John, was applied on another occasion to some whose names are not specified. “ There be some standing here who shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom <sup>x</sup>.” The didactic use of these prophecies seems to have been to check the erroneous notion, that whenever Christ spoke of his “ coming,” it meant his coming to judge the world at the last day. For the expression, “ shall not taste of death *until*, &c.” rather implies that those persons should afterwards taste death ; and that this expression concerning St. John was intended only to convey the same meaning, we learn from that apostle himself : “ Then went this saying abroad among the brethren, that that dis-

<sup>u</sup> John xxi. 22.

<sup>x</sup> Matt. xvi. 28. Mark ix. 1. Luke ix. 27.

ciple should not die ; yet Jesus said not unto him, He shall not die ; but, If I will that he tarry till I come," &c.<sup>y</sup>

*Judas Iscariot.*

As our Lord was to be betrayed by one of his apostles, it seems but natural that this should be made the subject of prophecy by him, in order to prevent any possible objection respecting his want of foresight in the choice of the twelve<sup>z</sup>. Such, then, might have been the primary design of this prophecy. But, like his others, its record might have been intended to convey also some instruction to the Church in after times—even to us.

Indeed it cannot but strike one as remarkable, not that he should be betrayed, but that his betrayal (and that by one of his own friends) should be made a necessary part in his scheme of life as marked out for him in ancient prophecy, and that he should point to it, as to one of those important figures in the great prophetic painting, at which we are to pause and learn something.

Now the circumstances of the betrayal were such, as to make it highly probable that Judas did not intend the death of his Master, but rather designed to force him to an open declaration of himself as a temporal King ; the character under which he was at that time obstinately contemplated, even by his most faithful followers. Otherwise, indeed, it would

<sup>y</sup> John xxi. 23. <sup>z</sup> Matt. xxvi. 25.



be impossible to account for his behaviour at the last supper. As, for instance, that he should leave the room to execute his purpose, knowing that our Lord was aware whither he was going, and with what intent. Doubtless he thought, that if his stratagem succeeded, his impatient zeal would not only have been excused, but even honoured and rewarded. The rejection of the wages of his guilt too, the natural result of severe disappointment, is perfectly consistent with this view<sup>a</sup>.

It is probable, therefore, that the apostles considered the crime of Judas simply as an act of treachery or treason. He is not called murderer, bloody, or inhuman, but traitor. Regarding the Church as a kingdom of which Christ is the head, his offence was not so properly moral as political. It was a presumptuous attempt to change the constitution of that kingdom, by introducing into it the pomp and power of this world. And if so, this prophecy might have served (among many others more obviously framed with this view) to warn the apostles and their successors, not to

<sup>a</sup> The common view of Judas's crime, that it proceeded from avarice, is so unsatisfactory, that many have been at no small pains to set the transaction in a more intelligible light. Michaelis (see *Introd. to the New Test.* vol. iii. p. 23, 24. Marsh's edition) attributes the act of treachery to revenge for the rebuke which Judas received respecting the unction at Bethany. Mr. Thruston's very ingenious book, "*The night of Treason,*" seems to leave no room for further doubt or controversy.



betray the holy charge with which they were intrusted, by attempting, whether from motives of avarice and ambition, or from want of confidence in the support of heaven, to convert Christ's spiritual crown into an earthly one.

*Prophecy concerning Mary<sup>b</sup>.*

The incident which gave occasion to this was the anointing the Lord's feet by Mary, who is said to have been the sister to Lazarus; and the prophecy was, "Wheresoever this Gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this that this woman hath done be told for a memorial of her." Our Lord adds the reason, why he made a circumstance apparently so trivial, the occasion of so marked a prophetic declaration; "for in that she hath poured the ointment on my body, she did it for my burial." It would seem, therefore, that he wished to point to some connection between his death and his anointing; and this connection may perhaps be explained by the conversation which subsequently took place between him and his disciples, the subject of which was the nature of his kingdom. Hitherto he had borne the form and office of a servant or minister, but his work was now done; and as the prophet of old entered the guard-room and anointed Jehu king over Israel<sup>c</sup>,

<sup>b</sup> Matt. xxvi. 12. Mark xiv. 8.

<sup>c</sup> 2 Kings ix.

so Mary came in to anoint Jesus on his approaching entrance upon his kingdom. Immediately after this took place, Judas went out to betray him, and a discussion commenced respecting the rank his followers were to hold in his kingdom, as if arising out of some remark which he had made on what Mary had done. Lastly, we read his declaration, "I appoint unto you a kingdom as my Father hath appointed unto me, that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel<sup>d</sup>."

*Nathaniel and the Thief on the Cross<sup>e</sup>.*

There are two other prophetic declarations which our Lord made to individuals, and which may seem to require notice in the view here taken of his prophecies. The first is that to Nathaniel. "Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man<sup>f</sup>." But if this be applicable indeed to Nathaniel individually, for it is expressed in the plural, it can only be considered as a general figurative allusion to those signs of divine communication, the miracles, by which he was to prove that he was the Son of God, the King of Israel, and

<sup>d</sup> Luke xxii. 29, 30.

<sup>e</sup> John i. 51. Luke xxiii. 43.

<sup>f</sup> John i. 51.

is not therefore specific enough to be classed among the prophecies.

The other was a prophetic promise relating to a state beyond the ordinary use of prophecy. We cannot recognise its fulfilment, nor was it, from its very nature, made with the common object and intent of all his prophecies, "that when these things come to pass ye may know that I am he." It is therefore rather to be classed with his other revelations of a future state, and as such belongs not to the present point of inquiry.

#### IV. CONCERNING THE DESTRUCTION OF JERUSALEM.

THE holy city, the temple and its service, together with the existence of the Jews as a nation, comprised the externals of the old dispensation. All that was real and vital in that dispensation, had been done away with on the opening of our Lord's mission; but the closing scene, which was to annihilate the outward form, thus deprived of its living principle, was the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, and the dispersion of its worshippers. The visible church having been ever regarded as coexistent with, and inseparable from, the dispensation itself, the total removal of the former was the sign and pledge that the latter was indeed taken away. Until this event the slow-believing Jew might have

had some plea for asserting, that "in Judah alone was God known<sup>f</sup>," and "that Jerusalem was still the place where men ought to worship<sup>g</sup>;" but the prophetic finger which characterized its downfall, wrote a language, the interpretation of which was well understood to be, "The kingdom of heaven is departed from thee."

No wonder then that our Lord should dwell on this subject with such minuteness and solemnity, as to give the prophecy an air of importance beyond all his others. He came to do away with the old covenant and to establish the new. This was his work, and with reference to this, the propriety of those expressions whereby he announces himself as the author of this formal consummation of his ministry is obvious. Looking to the principle on which these remarks have proceeded, we may expect to find, too, the didactic tendency of such a prophecy bearing upon some point of proportionate consequence; and a brief analysis of the structure of its language will shew that such is remarkably the case. That language may be arranged under three heads:

1. The literal description of the events prophesied; for instance, "As for these things which ye behold, the days will come in the which there shall not be left one stone upon another<sup>h</sup>."

<sup>f</sup> Psalm lxxvi. 1.

<sup>g</sup> John iv. 20.

<sup>h</sup> Mark xiii. 2. Luke xix. 44. xxi. 6.

2. The metaphorical, or rather hieroglyphic language adopted from the Jewish Scriptures, especially the Prophets ; for instance, “ The sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars of heaven shall fall, and the powers that are in heaven shall be shaken<sup>1</sup>. ”

3. The third source of imagery is the day of our Lord’s second coming to judge the world ; and as in this is suspended the *moral* of the prophecy, to this all further remarks will be confined.

Up to the period of our Saviour’s advent, the progress of the Jewish dispensation had been so ordained, as to be made applicable in its several successive parts to the Christian, when it should be given ; applicable, as the type to its counterpart, the shadow to its substance. The history of the Jewish Church is, according to the interpretation of inspired wisdom, a series of prophecies or emblems designed to be fulfilled in the Christian. When our Saviour came, and commenced his ministry, the closing scene of the old covenant was all that remained ; and here, by a reversed order, the closing scene of the Christian dispensation was made to furnish the instruments and emblems of prophecy for the end of the Jewish. It may be necessary to explain what is meant by this assertion, before the didactic import of the prophecy so framed is pointed out.

<sup>1</sup> Mark xiii. 25.



It is not unusual to say, that our Lord has blended in this prophecy, the events of the last day with those of the downfall of Jerusalem; which is not a complete view of the case, and hardly a correct one as far as it does go. His use of these mysterious images, should rather be considered the same as his use of the hieroglyphic symbols of ancient prophecy; that is, *they are employed in the prophecy only in their secondary and symbolical meaning.* When, for instance, we read, that the Lord “will send his angels and gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other<sup>k</sup>,” *the only meaning of the description in this place* is, that which relates to the fate of his elect on the destruction of Jerusalem. I do not deny that it is capable of another interpretation, and that it is a description of part of the last day’s eventful scene; nay more, I should say, that is its literal and original meaning; and I should say in like manner of the expressions, “the stars falling from heaven,” and “the sun being turned into darkness,” that if they were not taking a part as it were in the figurative representation of prophecy, they would signify the actual derangement of the heavenly system. But as, in this latter case, the descriptions are here introduced only in their secondary application, so we may conclude that in the former instance the same only is intended. For it

<sup>k</sup> Matt. xxiv. 31.



is to be observed, that all the revelation concerning the last day contained in these prophecies had been previously detailed in one form or another. The *revelation* had been already made, and this was only an adaptation of its imagery to the destruction of Jerusalem. The propriety of this method is another question; but those who are disposed to regard it as intricate and unnatural, should remember, that the revealed circumstances of the last day, had to the mind of a believer already assumed the form and certainty of recorded events, and admitted, in an address to him, of the same use as historical facts. For, to a believer, what is prophecy but anticipated history?

Such appears to be the true character of this prophecy. At the same time, that some indistinctness and confusion should exist in a cursory view of it is natural enough, considering that a portion of its imagery is derived from a state of things which "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard." It is the necessary result of our want of an appropriate and literal language for unearthly revelation. All description of such mysteries, can only be composed of terms adopted or metaphorical; and where (as in this prophecy) a *second* transfer of these terms has been made, it is not immediately obvious, whether the objects from which that language is borrowed, be those whose original property it is, or those others which have invaded, and taken possession of it, for want of a language of their own.

But if the introduction of these topics into the prophecy in question was not made with a view to reveal the mysteries of the last day, what was the intent? It has been already suggested, that the fate of Jerusalem probably represented the fate of the old dispensation. Now if the end of the world was to the Christian dispensation what the destruction of Jerusalem was to the Mosaic, the inference forced on men's minds by having these two corresponding events continually brought in close connection before them was, *that Christianity was the final covenant of God with man*, that Christ having once come, we were never to look for another mediator, and another dispensation.

That such was actually the impression wrought by these means on the earliest ages, may be not unfairly presumed, from the transition which soon took place in the application of the terms, "the last days," the "end of the world," &c. First adopted as descriptive of the end of Jerusalem, from the hint they continually afforded, by the mode of their use, that Christianity was the final dispensation, they gradually came to be used for the whole *Christian period*, considered in that light. Thus the Epistle to the Hebrews (the main object of which is to assert this very truth) opens with a contrast between the old and the new covenants, and designates the period of the latter by "these last days." "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past by the prophets

unto the fathers, hath in *these last days* spoken unto us by his Son<sup>m</sup>."

In short, the images of the end of the world, were first employed in our Saviour's prophecy of the destruction of Jerusalem, in the same manner as if, using hieroglyphics, he had expressed that event by a picture of the circumstances under which the world was to end: in his choice of these images he probably designed to inculcate the doctrine, that Christianity was the final dispensation of God to mankind; and from the impression thus produced, the phrases, "the last days," the "end of the world," and the like, came to signify the whole period of the Christian dispensation, viewed in the light of God's final covenant with his creatures.

#### THE TEMPTATION AND TRANSFIGURATION.

THERE are two events in our Saviour's history, which, although not generally considered as making part of his ministry to man, yet are so far mysteriously connected with it as to deserve a particular notice. The first is,

##### *The Temptation*<sup>n</sup>.

In the exposition of this, more perhaps than of

<sup>m</sup> Heb. i. 1, 2.

<sup>n</sup> Matt. iv. 1. Mark i. 13. Luke iv. 2.

any other passage of Scripture, the theologian requires to be reminded of his proper province. Many exercising their ingenuity in the unprofitable attempt to explain the *real nature* of those mysteries which God has disclosed to us, instead of *their reference to us*, have made it, and other awful and glorious spectacles of revelation, subjects of contemplation and wonder, rather than symbols of instruction. Revelation has been fitly called "Light." Its great Author has designated himself as "Light." But it is a light to see by, not to gaze at. It is analogous, not to any dazzling meteor in the appearance of nature, or to any splendid spectacle produced by art, but to that glorious luminary, which is not the less serviceable in enabling us to be sure of our path, that we cannot stedfastly behold it.

Out of this arises another error. Mistaking the character of theological knowledge, we naturally mistake its extent and limits. If a subject be proposed to us, the real nature of which we are to study, it seems just and reasonable that it should be placed before us *in a complete form*. If agriculture, for instance, had been a subject of revelation, men would doubtless not only have been instructed in the right method of preparing the earth, but the necessity of sowing the seed; and whatever else might be requisite to secure a complete harvest, would have been included in the revelation. Accordingly, the theologian who expects so to under-

stand such parts of the scheme of redemption as have been revealed, as if the knowledge were absolute and not relative, naturally attempts to fill up that scheme, so as to make all appear rational, intelligible, wise, merciful, in short, perfect. All which is contrary to Scripture. For, St. Paul affirms, in the first place, that “now we see through a glass darkly,” and secondly, that “we know *in part*.” Scenes infinitely more mysterious, unaccountable, and awful than the temptation, or even than the death of Christ, may have taken place in the scheme of man’s redemption, of which we know no more than the unborn does of life. And even with regard to those points which are revealed, we shall strangely bewilder ourselves if we so use them, as forgetting that they are lights to see by, not to look at.

The character and design of the temptation, may perhaps be best understood, by contrasting it with the crucifixion. The former was the commencement, the latter the close of Christ’s work. They correspond too in one remarkable circumstance. *Each was the hour of Satan.* In the first, Christ was led into the wilderness purposely to be tempted by him, and that ended, the Devil departed from him “for a season.” That the concluding scene of his ministry was the occasion when he was permitted to return, and once more to display the



utmost exertion of his power, is not only probable from the character of the event, but seems to be clearly intimated by our Saviour's words, "This is your hour and the power of darkness<sup>r</sup>;" "The Prince of this world cometh<sup>s</sup>."

Now the great object of Christ's ministry was to undo the mischief which the evil being had done. And this was twofold: first, he had introduced into the world sin; secondly, he had introduced death. Now it is admitted by all rational Christians, that the solemn spectacle on the cross had reference to the latter. Christ's death there is said to be vicarious, that is, he died instead of those who were the proper subjects of death: he died, "that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life<sup>t</sup>;" in other words, he died for his Church. In the mysterious scene of the crucifixion, he may be considered as representing the universal Church, undergoing (as it must collectively, and in its members separately) the mortal decay and dissolution of this world, but escaping from the spiritual evils accompanying that decay and dissolution in a world to come. Christ died and rose again from the dead, in order to exhibit death as it was in future to take place; that is, separated from all that was most horrible in it, divested of its "terrors," disarmed of its "sting," and no longer the same death.

<sup>r</sup> Luke xxii. 53.<sup>s</sup> John xiv. 30.<sup>t</sup> John iii. 15, 16.



Now let us turn to our more immediate subject, the temptation. Satan had brought into the world sin as well as death; sin before death; its fore-runner, and its cause. Now the temptation appears to have been with regard to sin, what the crucifixion was with regard to death. It was a vicarious representation. Christ was first tempted instead of his Church, and afterwards died instead of it. But, as his death did not imply that his Church was not afterwards to be subject to mortality, but only that the worst and most characteristic evil of death was done away with; so, with regard to the temptation, he was tempted instead of his Church, not in order that his Church should be no more tempted, but to shew that the strongest temptations should no longer be necessarily fatal; that he who was then the earthly abode of the Godhead, having manifested, and given a specimen of, the curtailed and no longer resistless power of the evil one, his followers might know, that when he left the world, and God was manifested in another way, namely, by his Holy Spirit, that the abode of the Godhead on earth should still be equally secure against temptation, if the same use were made of the same power "working in it"; that his Church, which is now the earthly residence of the Godhead, and

<sup>u</sup> "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up," are words, which can be only understood as implying, that Christ was then what the Jewish temple had been, and what the Church was to be, viz. the abode of the Godhead.

whose members are "the temple of the Holy Ghost <sup>x</sup>," should still indeed be tempted, as was he in whom "dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily <sup>y</sup>," but like him not necessarily unto sin.

That the temptation, if exhibited with this view, should have some prophetic reference to the trials of the Church in successive ages is natural. We should indeed be surprised to find it otherwise <sup>z</sup>. The temptations of individual Christians being of infinite variety, and being besides less important in detail, the trials of the Church, more particularly as a body, would surely be the trials pointed to by this mystery. Especially too as it was the Church, and not any individual members, which was to be marked as finally triumphant over the wiles of Satan <sup>a</sup>.

<sup>x</sup> 1 Cor. vi. 19.

<sup>y</sup> Col. ii. 9.

<sup>z</sup> The several circumstances of the temptation, from their manifest reference to the establishment and trials of the Jewish Church, (the great type according to St. Paul of the Christian,) of themselves suggest this view of the transaction. The forty days' fast can hardly be considered as an unintentional coincidence with the forty days, during which Moses was in the mount with God, before the promulgation of the Jewish law. The answers of our Saviour to the tempter too, have all undoubted reference to the especial trials of God's early Church in its progress to the earthly Canaan.

<sup>a</sup> The only way in which the temptations of the Church are known is by the *success* of the tempter. But it must be borne in mind, that the parallel between Christ and his Church, is not impaired by this circumstance. For, it is not the Church which has yielded, but certain members of it for the time being, it matters not how large a proportion of them, suppose all, provided

Let us then consider what have been the temptations of Christ's Church since its establishment, and let us compare them with the several stages of this singular and mysterious transaction.

The first suggestion of the devil to Christ was, that, after long fasting, he should "command the stones to be made bread<sup>b</sup>." Now, although it seems by no means intended that the order of the Church's trials should be the same as that of its type, which indeed are not recorded in the same order by St. Matthew and St. Luke, yet it has so happened, that the first temptations of his Church arose from poverty and distress; and great need had it for the first three centuries to remember, that "man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God<sup>c</sup>."

Again, the tempter is represented as suggesting to Christ that, contrary to the course appointed him, and trusting to the support of angels, he should cast himself down from a pinnacle of the temple; with a view, perhaps, to dazzle and attract the multitude, amongst whom he would have alighted<sup>d</sup>. Presumptuous reliance on divine grace

that by its recovery and reformation, the Church itself is proved to have escaped.

<sup>b</sup> Matt. iv. 3. Luke iv. 3.

<sup>c</sup> Matt. iv. 4. Luke iv. 4.

<sup>d</sup> This temptation in its primary import was, perhaps, of a twofold character; at least there seems to be good ground for

and favour, even to the despising of all appointed means, (such as his Church too has been tempted to indulge in,) is too exact a counterpart to be mistaken. We may even venture, perhaps, to pursue the analogy further, and to consider the suggestion of Satan, "Angels shall bear thee up<sup>e</sup>," as the same which has tempted the Church to call in the aid of departed saints, to depend on them to bear it up, and to trust to their interposition for its security and success.

The remaining temptation of our Lord is of still more obvious application. The devil is said to have taken him up into an exceeding high mountain, and to have shewn him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them, and to have said unto him, "All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me<sup>f</sup>." The parallel scarcely need be drawn. His Church also has seen the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them, and has been tempted in the pride of popish times to grasp at universal temporal dominion, and to forget its spiritual character. To this temptation it is still

conjecturing, that more was intended than to tempt the Saviour to an act of presumptuous confidence. The choice of the place, a pinnacle of the temple, from which his descent would have been a public spectacle to the Jews, looks much as if it had some reference to the well-known prejudice, that their Messiah, the Son of man, should be seen descending visibly from the clouds, preparatory to his assumption of a temporal state and authority.

<sup>e</sup> Luke iv. 10, 11. Psalm xci. 11, 12.

<sup>f</sup> Matt. iv. 9.

exposed, in proportion as its members look to temporal power and temporal glory as their proper objects of ambition<sup>g</sup>.

# THE TRANSFIGURATION<sup>h</sup>.

ONE cannot but be struck, on perusing the Gospels, with the continual request of the Jews to have a *sign* given them from heaven, even whilst our Lord was in the act of performing his signs and miracles for their conversion. Their desire (as was before observed) appears to have been founded on the prophecy of Daniel, which describes the Son of man as “coming with the clouds of heaven<sup>i</sup>.” The belief evidently was, that the Messiah should be seen literally descending from the heavens, and arrayed in some brilliant emblem of his glory. That the fulfilment of this expectation might have been intended in the transfiguration, seems not improbable, from the remark of the apostles who were permitted to be witnesses of it. Their words seem to denote that *all ground of scruple* was now removed: “Why say the Scribes then that Elias must first come<sup>k</sup>?”

The appearance of Moses and Elias conversing

<sup>g</sup> See Appendix, [G.]

<sup>h</sup> Matt. xvii. 2. Mark ix. 2. Luke ix. 28.

<sup>i</sup> Dan. vii. 13.

<sup>k</sup> Matt. xvii. 10.



with him, was obviously a token that the covenant was changed, and the Law and the Prophets succeeded by the Gospel.

### CONCLUSION.

BEFORE I close this part of my subject, the allegorical interpretation which has been claimed for certain passages of our Lord's ministry, may seem to call for some further remarks. It may be asked, "Why should such a mode of instruction be adopted, the more natural way being for our Lord to deliver his doctrines in express terms; and as he has actually done so, what need of another language to convey the same truth?"

In the first place, then, to the Jews the more natural method was the allegorical; such being the character of their numerous rites, and of the greater part of their Scriptures.

Besides which, the Christian's view of the *doctrines* of his religion was hereby connected with the *proofs* of it. The same miracle furnished at once instruction and proof of the teacher's authority to instruct; so also did the completion of a prophecy<sup>1</sup>.

To which I may add, that in the case of a miracle assuming the character of a prophecy, the miracle carries with it its own proof that it was not a forgery or delusion. The importance then of perceiving the secondary character of such miracles, at least, is obvious.

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix, [H.]



It cannot be denied that an injudicious application of the method very soon prevailed among Christians, and to this it is owing that it has so long fallen into disuse, and is so generally regarded as at best but fanciful.

Nevertheless, to reject it altogether (as many are disposed to do) is, perhaps, to close our eyes against one half of the meaning of Scripture; and it may always be at least *safely* adopted, when it is not made the ground of any new doctrine.



## PART II.

### APOSTOLIC AGE.

From A. D. 33—100.

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#### CHAP. I.

THE same reasons, which induced me to decline a detailed account of the biography of our blessed Lord, (although a necessary constituent in the history of Christianity,) will apply also to the most important portion of the lives of the apostles ; and, indeed, to the whole narrative of the early progress of the Gospel, which has been written by the finger of God himself, and intended doubtless to be read in that sacred character, not merely by the philosopher and the scholar, but by the unlearned, and by all.

As the records of Christianity change their character, and are presented to us by human authorities, this scruple will cease to operate ; and the propriety and need of completeness and detail will vary, according to the circumstances under which any portion of ecclesiastical history may be already before the public—according to the popular and accessible form in which it is circulated, together with the merits and the defects of the performance.

Even in the former case, however, much assistance may be afforded to the reader of holy writ, by providing those collateral points of information, which are requisite to a full and fair view of the sacred records. Much, too, may in this case be done, in the way of pointing out the general scheme—the combining principle, as it were, of events and circumstances, which, without such assistance, to some may wear the aspect of detached and unconnected fragments. It is by reference to these objects, then, that the course observed in pursuing the history of Christianity will be regulated,

*Distinction between Christianity, as taught by our  
Saviour and by his Apostles.*

IN treating of our Lord's ministry, it was remarked, that some of the most important points of the Christian scheme were either wholly omitted by him, or lightly touched on. Few, even preparatory, steps appear to have been taken for the establishment of his Church—that kingdom which was to comprehend all mankind. As if the very office of initiating members into this great society did not properly belong to him, he baptized none. His revelations were for the most part communicated in parables, or by hints and allusions equally obscure; and although it is true, that his apostles were allowed an explanation of these, yet it is clear that at his death, and even after his ascen-

sion, they were as much in the dark on some of the main truths of redemption, as were the Jews who crucified him.

It is evident, indeed, that our Saviour's object in his ministry was not to teach Christianity, nor to establish the Christian society. It was necessary that he should leave the world, in order that he might become the subject of the one, and the head of the other. "It is expedient for you that I go away<sup>a</sup>," are words in which he plainly declares this himself. The office of making Christians was the office of the Comforter. God manifested himself in the flesh, to redeem the world, and to atone for sin—to be made the object of a new faith, the subject of a new religion. God manifested himself by the Spirit, to instruct men in what he had done, and to teach them what they were bound in consequence of this, to do.

Evident as this may be when stated, it is very apt to be overlooked or forgotten. Many have been the fruitless and unsatisfactory attempts to reconcile the Gospels with the Epistles,—one part of the new covenant with the other, proceeding on a vague conception, of the whole being promulgated at the same time, and with the same intent.

It may be useful therefore, for the purpose of marking clearly the distinction alluded to, to consider it more exactly, as exhibited in what was taught and what was done—in the words and the

<sup>a</sup> John xvi. 7.

works of our Lord on the one hand, and of our Lord's apostles on the other ; both proceeding from the same divine source, and harmonizing so as to produce one common result ; yet so different in their character and import, as to occasion serious error in those who neglect the difference.

First, then, our Saviour wrought miracles, and so did the Apostles, and so did Moses, Elias, and many others commissioned by heaven. To a careless observer, then, it may be satisfactory to say, that Christ's were superior to the others, because they were more in number, and perhaps greater in kind, than had been performed by his predecessors, or were to be performed by his followers. Granting this, however, we may still reasonably expect to find in Christ's miracles, not merely superior power, but somewhat in that superiority which should especially denote the character of his mission. Else the manifestation of superiority would be only a barren display of power, a thing very inconsistent with the general scheme of God's dealings. Indeed as if to denote that the difference was not to be sought for in superiority of power, he expressly told his disciples, " he that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also ; and *greater works than these shall he do* ; because I go to my Father<sup>b</sup>." Let any one, then, candidly and attentively examine the mode of exercising this power in both cases, and he will scarcely fail to observe,

<sup>b</sup> John xiv. 12.



I. That in our Lord's miracles, he was the primary agent, in those of the apostles and others, they were instruments. Several incidental circumstances may be noticed in illustration of this position. No one, for instance, was more fully invested with the power of healing than was St. Paul; for we read, that certain sick folk recovered only by touching his garments<sup>c</sup>; yet we are equally sure, that he was but the medium through which the Comforter performed these miraculous cures; because we find him, on one occasion, leaving behind him at *Miletum* a useful coadjutor, *because he was sick*<sup>d</sup>, and on another occasion, suggesting to Timothy an ordinary remedy for an infirmity under which he was labouring<sup>e</sup>. In our Saviour's ministry, on the contrary, human means are never resorted to, so as to imply the want of miraculous power. His miracles are at one time the result of persevering importunity<sup>f</sup>, at another the dictate of friendship or of pity<sup>g</sup>; on them his missionaries and his followers were taught to rely for food, for money, and for raiment<sup>h</sup>; and on one remarkable occasion

<sup>c</sup> Acts xix. 12.

<sup>d</sup> 2 Tim. iv. 20.

<sup>e</sup> 1 Tim. v. 23.

<sup>f</sup> E. g. Luke xviii. 35. Matt. xv. 22.

<sup>g</sup> E. g. The case of Lazarus, that of the widow of Naip's son, &c.

<sup>h</sup> Luke xxii. 35. Mark vi. 8. and more particularly Matt. xvii. 27. The provision for the Passover which preceded his death may perhaps be classed among these.

he rebuked them for having recourse to ordinary means, as implying the failure of this resource in him. "Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels<sup>i</sup>?" All this was surely intended to point to the *discretionary* power which was peculiarly his. To him alone God gave the Spirit not by measure. The very words which he used in the exercise of miraculous power have a distinct character; such as, "Lazarus, come forth<sup>k</sup>," "Young man, I say unto thee, Arise<sup>l</sup>;" whilst in the miracles themselves, in many of them at least, the marks are more unequivocal. Take the cure of Malchus's ear—who does not see in such an act as this, the unconstrained agency of divinity, called into exercise by the circumstances themselves, and not connected, as in the case of the apostles, with any special commission, nor directed to any special purpose, beyond the display of Christ's real character? Who, in short, can peruse the course of his ministry, and not sympathize with the sister of Lazarus, in that tone of mind which caused her to exclaim, "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died<sup>m</sup>?"

II. There is another line of distinction, still more discernible, between our Lord's miracles and those of the apostles, and of all others. They were generally *symbolical*—the vehicles of instruction, as

<sup>i</sup> Matt. xxvi. 53.

<sup>k</sup> John xi. 43.

<sup>l</sup> Luke vii. 14.

<sup>m</sup> John xi. 21, 32.

well as the signs of power. Like the voice from mount Sinai, they were at once miracles and revelations, a divine language, conveying a divine message. And this circumstance, if rightly considered, not a little confirms the view which has been taken of the primary, immediate, and independent agency of Christ, as contrasted with the instrumental character of his apostles ; the former, not only performing acts above human nature, but moulding them at will to serve occasional purposes, as if the power were his own, part of his original nature ; the latter humbly, fearfully, and almost passively obeying the dictates of a secretly controlling power, and avowing that they “ had nothing to glory of, for necessity was laid on them<sup>n</sup>.”

III. Among all the miraculous acts, in which our Lord and his apostles may be contrasted, the one wherein an equality between them is most likely to be presumed, is the power of imparting the gifts of the Holy Ghost. Of this more particular notice will be taken by and by. At present it deserves attention, merely in the light of a miraculous power, as distinctly superior to all others, as the power of imparting life exceeds the privilege of partaking it. Yet it is obvious, that in their use of this, as of the other powers, the apostles were restricted, whereas our Lord's conduct exhibits no signs of any limitation. As no one would suppose the apostles to be the authors of life, because they were occa-

<sup>n</sup> 1 Corinth. ix. 16.

sionally permitted to recal the dead to life ; so, the office of imparting the gifts of the Holy Spirit, did not imply that these gifts proceeded originally from them, or that they were any but the instruments and agents of communication.

A similar character (as has been already pointed out) pervades our Lord's prophecies, as distinguished from all others, whether of the Old or the New Testament.

The exercise of the predictive power, proved in all cases alike, that the prophet was commissioned by God. But the constant and unvaried employment of that very prophetic spirit for doctrinal instruction—its use, in short, for purposes not prophetic, could only have been designed to indicate, what it does most plainly, that the prophet wielded that divine instrument at pleasure, and not as one, “ who spake only as the Holy Ghost moved him.” In Christ, the prophetic faculty was exercised as his own, in his apostles and others, it was only exhibited as through agents and instruments. The language of the inspired mortal is, “ I cannot go beyond the commandment of the Lord, to do either good or bad of mine own mind<sup>o</sup> ;” that of the Author of inspiration, “ If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee<sup>p</sup> ?”

It would be easy to pursue this subject further, but it may be sufficient merely to add, that in con-

<sup>o</sup> Numbers xxii. 18. xxiv. 13.

<sup>p</sup> John xxi. 22.

sidering the secondary use to which Christ applied the divine agency, as an indication that he was a divine person, it deserves notice that it was of himself, or of his kingdom, or of his work—of himself, in short, either immediately or remotely, that he caused his miracles to speak. So that every miracle, every prophecy, is used by him for some purpose beyond its specific and appropriate one, and that purpose one connected with himself, “The works which the Father hath given me to finish, *the same works* that I do, bear witness of me that the Father hath sent me<sup>a</sup>.”

His sermons, exhortations, precepts, commandments, all lead us forcibly to the same conclusion. All are addressed to mankind, no less than the law from mount Sinai, in the person of God himself. As to the *language*, it is “a new commandment *I* give unto you<sup>b</sup>.” “It was said to them<sup>c</sup> of old time, Thou shalt not kill ; but *I say unto you*, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause, shall be in danger of the judgment.” Still more may the matter of his discourses be appealed to, for marks of a difference occasioned by the same cause. Our Lord did not, indeed could not, preach the whole of Christianity to his disciples and to the world ; because the subject was incomplete, until he had suffered on the cross, risen from the dead, and ascended into heaven. The most essential

<sup>a</sup> John v. 36.

<sup>b</sup> John xiii. 34.

<sup>c</sup> Matt. v. 21, 22. and Whitby on the passage.



points of Christian instruction, were precisely those which could not yet be given, for the simple reason, that the events out of which they arose had not yet taken place. Hence his assertion, "It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you<sup>t</sup>."

Christianity then, strictly speaking, commenced with the preaching of the apostles. It is the dispensation of the Spirit, and by the Spirit only has it been conducted. Our Lord is the subject, the foundation stone<sup>n</sup>, not the founder of it. It holds up to us as the object of our faith, "God manifested in the flesh<sup>x</sup>;" but the world is directed to this truth, and assisted in embracing it, and acting on it, by God manifested by the Spirit. The apostles accordingly were expressly forbidden to begin their ministry, until the formal sign was given, that the Comforter had descended amongst them. Until that event, the world was no more under the Christian dispensation, than Israel was under the Mosaic before the Law was actually given,—whatever anticipation, either Moses on the one hand or the apostles on the other, might be supposed to

<sup>t</sup> John xvi. 7.

<sup>n</sup> Thus St. Paul, in his use of this very metaphor, addresses the Ephesian Church, as a building whose "chief corner stone was Jesus Christ, in whom," adds he, "ye also are builded together for an habitation of God *through the Spirit*." Eph. ii. 22.

<sup>x</sup> 1 Tim. iii. 16.



have had of the revelation which was preparing. That the apostles were imperfectly acquainted with the leading principles of Christianity, is evident beyond a doubt. Why else, indeed, should it be necessary to send one, not only “to bring all things to their remembrance,” but “to teach them all things?” Why that expression of disappointment and despondency, “We trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel”, if indeed they knew ought of the doctrine of redemption by his death? None, surely, who understood the nature of Christ and of Christ’s kingdom, can be supposed to have put such a question to him as, “Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel<sup>a</sup>?” a question which goes the farther to prove that our Lord was not fully qualifying his disciples to instruct the world, that manifestly as it arose from ignorance and error, he did not attempt to correct them; but only referred them to the coming of him, whose proper office it was to do so, and reminded them of the only part which he had qualified them to assume, to be his witnesses. “He said unto them, It is not for you,” (or as it may be rendered,) you cannot be expected, “to know the times or seasons which the Father hath put in his own power. But ye shall receive power after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you, and ye shall be my witnesses<sup>b</sup>.”

<sup>a</sup> John xiv. 26.    <sup>b</sup> Luke xxiv. 21.    <sup>c</sup> Acts i. 6.    <sup>d</sup> Acts i. 7, 8.

Even after that first descent of the Holy Ghost, Christianity was in its infancy. The illumination of the Spirit was gradual, and as more light was required, then, and then only, was the supply given. It is easy to trace three distinct periods in the Apostolic History, in the first of which the Church was kept in ignorance of the second, and had advanced far upon the second before the third was declared to them, and each by a special revelation<sup>c</sup>. Their ministry commenced with the Jews alone. It appears certain, that the apostles themselves did not then understand that it was ever to be extended beyond their countrymen. Their ancient national error was not yet removed, that through Judaism the world must be admitted to the benefits of the Messiah's advent—must be saved, not as the sons of fallen Adam, but as the children of righteous Abraham. Under this impression they taught through Judæa, Samaria, and at last at Antioch<sup>d</sup>.

Then it was, that, by a special vision sent to Peter<sup>e</sup>, his scruples were first removed, and he was made to understand, by the conversion of Cornelius and his household, that a door was opened to the Gentiles. But to what Gentiles? Not to all indiscriminately, but to such as, like Cornelius, were "devout Gentiles," "fearing God," otherwise known as "proselytes of the gate." Gentiles who,

<sup>c</sup> See Lord Barrington's *Miscellanea Sacra*.

<sup>d</sup> Acts xi. 19. From A. D. 33—41.

<sup>e</sup> Acts x. 10.

without becoming altogether Jews, had adopted their belief in the one true God, and sought acceptance with him by alms, by fasting, and by prayer. Yet of the baptism even of these, St. Peter's report to the Church of Jerusalem is but an apology. "Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift, as he did unto us who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, what was I, that I could withstand God<sup>f</sup>?"

Lastly, a further light broke forth on the Church, when, by another express revelation, Paul and Barnabas were separated for the conversion of the idolatrous Gentiles<sup>g</sup>. Of all the wonderful counsel of the Lord, this was considered the most wonderful. This it is which is especially styled "the mystery of godliness," the revealing of which produced a sensation, both within and without the Church, to which, no one who would understand the writings and the history of the great apostle of the Gentiles, should be inattentive.

These three classes of converts—the Jewish, the devout Gentile, and the idolatrous Gentile—continued to be addressed and treated as in certain respects distinct, until "the end of all things," the grand consummation which took place in the destruction of Jerusalem, and the downfall of the nation<sup>h</sup>. By this act of divine visitation, the Jewish society was dissolved, and the Jews were

<sup>f</sup> Acts xi. 17. A. D. 41—45.    <sup>g</sup> Acts xiii. 2.    <sup>h</sup> A. D. 70.

no longer entitled to be treated as a distinct civil body. With this event, accordingly, ceased that scrupulous regard which previously the Christian preachers had paid to them as such. The converted Jew was henceforth under no civil obligation to retain the customs of his fathers, and the proselyte of the gate was released from obedience to a society which was extinct, and was henceforth no more bound to abstain from things strangled and from blood, than was the idolater who had never entered into a compact with the worshippers of the temple. Christ's kingdom was come<sup>h</sup>.

*What preparation Christ had made before his departure  
for the establishment of Christianity.*

Notwithstanding the assertion, that the establishment of Christianity was the province of the Comforter—of God the Holy Ghost—that assertion by no means implies that our Saviour's Ministry contributed nothing, towards the forming of that insti-

<sup>h</sup> Lardner argues from this slow and gradual illumination of the inspired Church, that neither St. Matthew nor St. Luke's Gospel could have been composed very early; inasmuch as both display an insight into that mystery, which was reserved for the last stage of revelation. But his reasoning is scarcely admissible. For, the apostles, as witnesses, may have recorded or assisted others in recording facts, before the full import of those facts was revealed to them; and St. Luke and St. Matthew write narratives in the strictest sense, and not treatises.

tution, of which he was properly the subject. During his abode on earth, he had sent forth twelve of his followers, and again seventy, with a commission to baptize, and to proclaim "the kingdom of heaven is at hand<sup>i</sup>." He had instituted the sacraments, and had appointed a form of prayer. All which may be considered as preparatory to that which was peculiarly the work of the Holy Spirit, and analogous to that preparation which had been made for his appearance on earth as our Redeemer, by the previous manifestations of God. Accordingly, although his teaching, it may be, embraces all the essential doctrines of Christianity, yet from the very form adopted, that of parables, symbolical miracles, and didactic prophecies, the truths so deposited with his followers were plainly not designed to be understood, until the Holy Spirit should not only have brought all Christ's ministry to their remembrance, but taught them also all things implied and intended by it. Until such assistance was given, they were in possession of a revelation which they did not understand; and without this assistance there can be no question, that the Christian doctrines could never have been understood, explained, and preached. So, likewise, the Mosaic establishment had continued in its most important features inexpressive, ineffectual, and useless, until our Saviour's fulfilment of the law displayed it in

<sup>i</sup> Matt. x. 5. 7. Mark vi. 7, 12. Luke ix. 1, 2. x. 1, 9.



its true character, and explained its chief meaning. In short, from Adam until Christ the scheme of man's redemption was prefigured ; in Christ's ministry it was accomplished ; by the Spirit it was explained. From Adam until Christ, the religious knowledge of the world was like the gradual dawning of light which precedes the sunrise, and from which we infer the existence and anticipate the approach of the sun itself. Christ came ; but his coming was as when the sun has risen in mist and cloud, and can scarcely be discerned. And then came the Holy Spirit, like the breath of heaven which blows aside the cloud, and enables us to look upon the source of all the day-light with which we have been gradually blessed. So, also, our present condition as a Church may have some latent connection with futurity, which we shall then only be qualified to perceive, when God shall again manifest himself, and we " see him even as he is."

What is now to be considered is, how far the ministry of the Holy Spirit had been anticipated by our Saviour.

I. His promulgation of the Christian doctrines has already been noticed, as conveyed in a form not designed to be understood, until the illumination of the Holy Ghost should be applied ; many of them depending on events which had not as yet taken place ; as *e. g.* the doctrine of the Atonement, which arose out of his death, and of the Resurrection, which was testified by himself rising from the grave.



The most remarkable anticipation, however, was the command to baptize in the name of the Holy Ghost, as well as of the Father and the Son ; inasmuch as God, in the person of the Spirit, had not yet assumed the government of the Church.

II. With a like prospective view, the twelve apostles had been commissioned, first, by baptism and preaching repentance, to prepare men for the new era ; secondly, in his last interview with them, to be his witnesses. Their former commission (as from its nature might seem natural) expired on their return to resume their attendance on him ; but this latter (as appears from its character and from his own words) they were intended to bear permanently under the new dispensation. Hence the office of apostle was really two-fold. He was a witness of Christ, and he was a minister of the Holy Ghost. By virtue of his former appointment he was invested with the power of working miracles, which power he accordingly received from Christ himself. In the latter capacity he was furnished with those extraordinary endowments of the Holy Ghost, which are therefore called peculiarly the gifts of the Spirit. Of these, it is, the Psalmist speaks, when he describes our Lord as “ ascending up on high to receive gifts for men<sup>k</sup>.” For thus Christ also said, “ If I go not away the Comforter will not come, but if I go I will send him unto

<sup>k</sup> Psalm lxviii. 18.

you<sup>1</sup>.” As witnesses, then, the apostles performed those miracles which are termed “ signs” (σημεῖα) and “ wonders ;” (τέρατα,) and inasmuch as this office was of our Lord’s appointing, to him perpetually, and not to the Holy Spirit, they refer them<sup>m</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> John xvi. 7.

<sup>m</sup> The scriptural expression is “ *in his name,*” and “ *in that name ;*” a mode of speaking, which seems to denote an anxiety to avoid conveying the notion of Tritheism, in teaching the doctrine of the Trinity. It reminds the Christian, that he of whom the Scriptures are speaking, was the same God, in whose former name the old revelations had been made, and the miracles of old had been wrought ; that it was “ God in Christ reconciling the world unto himself.” (2 Corinth. v. 19.)

Accordingly, when the apostles were forbidden to preach Christianity to the Jews, the prohibition is said to have been “ that they speak henceforth to no man *in this name,*” (Acts iv. 17.) No one acquainted with the Scriptures of the Old Testament can suppose that the Jews, in making use of this expression, were pointing to Jesus either as a preacher or as a worker of miracles. To the term, used in a second intention, which is here denoted by the emphatic pronoun *this*, they attached a solemn and mysterious meaning, from the days of Moses. The origin of this is plainly set forth in Exodus, (iii. 13,) “ And Moses said unto God, Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you ; and they shall say unto me, *What is his name ?* what shall I say unto them ? And God said unto Moses, I AM That I AM : and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, ‘ I AM hath sent me unto you ;’ and God said moreover unto Moses, ‘ Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel,’ The Lord God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you : *this is my name for ever,* and this is my memorial unto all generations.” God commanded Moses to announce to his people, that he had appeared in a new name ; but God said moreover to him, that he must caution his

Thus Peter bids the lame man at the beautiful gate of the temple, "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk;" and to Æneas he

people, that he was still the same God of their fathers, &c. In a subsequent interview Moses was reminded of this in these terms, "I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, *by the name of God Almighty, but by my name Jehovah* was I not known unto them." (Exodus vi. 3.)

The expression thus adopted to denote a *new manifestation* of the Godhead naturally enough became an object of scrupulous veneration to the Israelites. They studiously avoided all mention of the name which denoted God in his new dispensation: a scruple which may be considered as sanctioned by the commandment, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain." Through every successive period of their history the same feeling is recorded. It was the *name* of the Lord that dwelt at Jerusalem, in that *name* the pious are said to walk, his *name* it is which is praised, and in his *name* their enemies are to be destroyed.

When, therefore, the Messiah was foretold, Isaiah had not only used the term Immanuel, but this expression, which to the Jews equally indicated another manifestation of the God of their fathers. The promise is, that "he would give them a *name, an everlasting name*; that they should be called by a *new name*;" and Christ himself is spoken of as one "whose *name* is holy." (Isaiah lvi. 5. lxii. 2.)

The Jews who attempted to stone him for making himself "equal with God," because he had said, "My Father worketh *hitherto* and I work," must (with these prophecies before them) have understood him, as claiming to be this new manifestation of the Godhead, and applying to himself this additional *name*, under which God was to appear for the purpose of establishing a new dispensation. (John v. 17.) Our form of baptism is an obvious allusion to it, and is equivalent to a command to baptize unto the Father as God, unto the Son as God, and unto the Holy Ghost as God. By this, too, may be explained (what is elsewhere re-

says ; “ Jesus Christ maketh thee whole<sup>n</sup> ;” because in each instance he was proving his credibility as a witness. But when he passes sentence on Ananias and Sapphira, he is acting as minister of the Holy Ghost ; and therefore so expresses himself as to imply that their death was a miracle wrought by God the Holy Ghost, for the purpose of proving and vindicating the reality of his agency. “ How is it that ye have agreed together to tempt the Spirit of the Lord ? Behold, the feet of them which have buried thy husband are at the door, and shall carry thee out<sup>o</sup>. ” Another act of Christ’s preparatory ministry then was, his ordaining an order of men,—his apostles,—for the special purpose of being witnesses to what he had said and done ; and also, qualifying them to become agents and ministers, in the new state of religion, which was to commence after his departure.

III. Besides this, he had appointed seventy disciples<sup>p</sup>, apparently with the same temporary commission as that with which his apostles were first sent. Perhaps by this time a greater number of missionaries might have been required ; or the apostles

marked) that our Saviour’s command to address prayer to the Father *in his name*, appears to have been fulfilled by the Apostles and early Christians, by addressing their prayers *to the Lord Jesus*.

<sup>n</sup> Acts iii. 6. ix. 34.

<sup>o</sup> Acts v. 9.

<sup>p</sup> Luke x. 1.

might have been detained about the person of our Lord, on account of some passages of his life, which rendered their presence necessary as his witnesses,—their permanent and peculiar duty. However that may be, the commission of the seventy had expired before the descent of the Holy Ghost; indeed, as far as we can see, immediately on their return to him. Meanwhile they, as well as the apostles, had scattered abroad much instruction, which God's blessed Spirit was sure to render effectual in all honest and good hearts. And although they were found on the descent of the Holy Ghost without any commission, yet it is highly probable that the first appointments to ministerial offices in the infant Church were made from this class: as from persons already prepared and practised by our Lord in a portion of his ministerial service, and, like the apostles themselves, peculiarly fitted for a second commission from the Holy Ghost. To this number, indeed, tradition has assigned more than one of the primitive worthies of the Church—Barnabas, Stephen, and others<sup>p</sup>.

IV. In addition to these, Christ had left behind him a body of disciples; adherents pledged to the good cause by the sacrament of baptism, and prepared, by the instruction which they had received from him and his apostles, for the Christian truths

<sup>p</sup> Clemen. Alexandr. Strom. lib. ii. p. 410. (ed. Heinsii Lutet. 1629.) Eusebii Hist. Eccl. lib. i. c. 12. lib. ii. c. 1. Epiph. Hæres. xx. lib. i.



with which the world was now to be enlightened. Of their number and precise character as a body, there is little to be learned, beyond the fact, that one hundred and twenty were found assembled on the election of Matthias<sup>9</sup>. Some have supposed them to have constituted a peculiar assembly ; and consider them to be intended by “the apostles’ company<sup>r</sup>,” to which Peter and John retired after their appearance before the Sanhedrim. Whether this were so or not, certainly they must have been so far prepared by their admission into the train of our Lord, as to have furnished capable and ready ministers for the Spirit, at that peculiar season when the harvest was greatest and the reapers fewest. Here then was a third order of faithful and experienced men, who, like the apostles and the seventy, were left qualified for a commission from that Comforter whom he had promised.

V. The sacraments form another portion of the Christian institution which was embraced by our Lord’s preparatory ministry. Their object and character have already been pointed out. Why they were instituted by him, and not, like all the other forms and ceremonies, left to the Holy Spirit, and to the Church under its guidance, is worthy of inquiry. Looking to the character of the apostles as appointed by our Lord, they appear only in the light of witnesses. Is there then any thing in the

<sup>9</sup> Acts i. 15—26.<sup>r</sup> Acts iv. 23.



sacraments which rendered these men under that character peculiarly fitting to be trustees, as it were, of those sacred rites? If there be, an answer may be thereby given to the inquiry; the question being always considered with that diffidence and humility, which the wisdom of Christ in his arrangement of the scheme of salvation, claims from every Christian. Now such a connection is discoverable. Baptism, first, is the symbol of a covenant between two parties—between the Christian and his Lord. On the part of the Saviour, it was instituted as the means whereby grace was given; and, as a proof of this, in the primitive Church it was always perhaps accompanied by some extraordinary gifts of the Spirit. On the part of the redeemed, it was a pledge that he *believed*. Thus, when the eunuch requested to be baptized by Philip, his answer is, “*If thou believest with all thy heart thou mayest*.” To the gaoler at Philippi, St. Paul made the same reply, when asked what was the requisite qualification to fit him for admission into the covenant of salvation; “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved<sup>t</sup>,” (i. e. made a Christian.) Baptism then was, on the part of the Christian, the pledge that *he believed*. Now the apostles were the especial witnesses of what was to be believed, they were the persons whose report was to be credited; and to them, therefore, most suitably was

<sup>s</sup> Acts viii. 37.

<sup>t</sup> Acts xvi. 31.

committed the sacrament of admission into the Church, "the keys of the kingdom," as to men already intrusted with the pass-word into it. Thus, the appointment of witnesses and the rite of baptism seem to be naturally connected, and to belong to one and the same period of the institution.

The sacrament of the Lord's supper is emphatically termed a memorial. It was enjoined on the apostles, and through them on all Christians, as a symbolical rite to be observed for ever in remembrance of Christ; in remembrance of him in his fulfilment of the most important part of his ministry. Being, then, in itself a sort of monument, or histrionic record, of the most mysterious of those events to which they were appointed witnesses, a reason presents itself, why the institution of this sacrament also, should have been assigned to the same period of the new dispensation, as the appointment of the witnesses themselves. *They* could surely best understand and explain its origin, who were chosen to bear testimony to the event which it was to call to remembrance; and who, if not all present like St. John at the awful scene, were yet present on those various occasions, when it had been prefigured and foretold, by words and by signs, by allusions to mysterious prophecies, by parables, or by typical miracles.

Beyond these, no institution of the new dispensation was anticipated by our Lord, unless we

except the dictation of that one prayer which on that account is called his<sup>u</sup>. Why this should have been done, especially as the suggestion of prayer seems so accordant with the other offices of inspiration by the Holy Ghost, and more especially as it actually did make a prominent feature amongst spiritual endowments, is a question which will perhaps seem not to admit of so obvious a reply as the foregoing inquiries. In truth, there is no little uncertainty as to the precise object of this prayer. To some it has appeared only in the light of a sanction and a model for prayer in general. Others have received it as a particular form of words, enjoined on Christians to be used according to the letter of the commandment whenever they prayed. The question has seldom perhaps appeared of moment to the Christian inquirer, and hence, generally, all these are acquiesced in as legitimate objects of the Lord's prayer. With reference to the present consideration, however, it may be necessary to take a more accurate and determinate view of it. Adopting the literal and obvious import of the passages in each Evangelist, which contain the account of its first being taught, we should certainly say, that our Lord was enjoining that very form of words exclusively or especially. In the Church, too, from the earliest times, the prayer has been used as it was given; and certainly has never,

<sup>u</sup> Matt. vi. 9. Luke xi. 2.

as far as we can judge, been regarded as a *model* or a rule for the composition of other prayers. Far from it, its character in some respects is very distinct ; although the difference is likely enough to escape our notice, from the very circumstance that we become familiar with it earlier than we do with any other composition. But it may be safely asserted, that as a *model* for prayer it was not received by the apostles and primitive Church. If we doubt it, let us refer only to the first prayer recorded in the Acts ; that, namely, which was offered up before the election of Matthias ; and we shall find it impossible to trace any special reference in this to the Lord's prayer. Again, it may with equal confidence be said, that it could not have been intended as a sanction for prayer, because this was not requisite. The very words with which it is prefaced, " When ye pray," implies that prayer was already understood and practised as a duty. To which we may add another weighty consideration. Our Saviour, in his directions concerning the prayers of Christians, expressly commands that they should be offered up *in his name* ; a command which we know has in all ages of the Church been most religiously observed. How comes it that the only prayer framed by him who gave the rule should violate it ? It cannot be said, that this was because he was himself to join in that form of prayer, for it was evidently a prayer for the disciples only, the request being, " teach us to pray," and the reply, " when

ye pray<sup>x</sup>." Nor was it because he was not yet glorified, and seated on the right hand of God to make intercession for sinners, if, at least, we claim for it the character of a perpetual appointment.

Without denying then, that in the record of this singular prayer, the Christian of all ages finds the highest authority and sanction for prayer in general, perhaps to a certain extent, a rule and guide, still the primary and specific object of this particular form of words must be sought for elsewhere; in some reference to the office and condition of the apostles and disciples, or in some other connection with the infant state of the Church. In suggesting then, that this prayer was composed and intended for the apostles and the other disciples, *considered as attendants on our Lord and helpers in his ministry*, it will not I hope, be thought that I am lessening the character of the prayer, or attempting to make its universal use among Christians seem less becoming or less a duty. Far from it, the conclusion to which it should lead is the very reverse. That such is the case then, is probable from the contents of the prayer.

1st, It is addressed to *God the Father*, and yet, notwithstanding Christ's repeated declaration, "Whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father *in my name*, he will give it you<sup>y</sup>," this important omission is made in the only form which he dictates. Now

<sup>x</sup> Luke xi. 2.

<sup>y</sup> John xv. 16. xvi. 23.



supposing this prayer to have been composed for his apostles and disciples, *in the character of his companions and helpers while on earth*, this is exactly what we should expect; for it was not until he should be glorified that prayer was to be made to him or in his name. Accordingly, when that time was now approaching, he tells his disciples, “hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name; ask and receive<sup>z</sup>.” Which amounted to this, “Henceforth ye are to pray in another character and another form. I go to be myself the object of prayer, and even to the Father must prayers be addressed in my name.” Look, too, at the first prayers of the Church, and you will observe precisely this charge. Take, *e. g.* that before the election of Matthias, “Thou, *Lord*, which knowest the hearts of all men<sup>a</sup>:” or that of Stephen, “*Lord Jesus, receive my spirit; Lord, lay not this sin to their charge<sup>b</sup>.*” This last is most to the point, because it is obviously an imitation of the prayer which the blessed Jesus made on the cross for his murderers, “Father, forgive them<sup>c</sup>,” &c. the precise change to which we have been alluding being adopted. It is not any more “Our Father,” but “Lord Jesus.”

With this, very strikingly accords the testimony of Pliny, whose careful inquiry into the Christian rites for the purpose of reporting them to Trajan,

<sup>z</sup> John xvi. 24.

<sup>a</sup> Acts i. 24.

<sup>b</sup> Acts vii. 59, 60.

<sup>c</sup> Luke xxiii. 34.



cannot but command credit, although he was no Christian. "They sing a hymn," he states, "to Christ" as to God. Indeed it may be worth considering, although it is immaterial to the present argument, whether the primitive Church did not, in addressing prayer to Christ glorified, consider themselves as fulfilling his command to pray to the Father in his name, understanding that command as if its tenour was this, "Hitherto ye have only learned to address God as the Father, now you must address him as the Son, in my name, under my character, in my person." It cannot be denied, at least, that such is actually the form of the Scripture prayers, as just quoted.

Let us then suppose, that *as attendants on and coadjutors with the Lord during his abode on earth*, the apostles were instructed to address God in the name and person of the Father; and then let us see whether the matter of the Prayer will confirm us in this supposition.

*Our Father which art in heaven.*—This expression, if it had any reference to the point in question, must be intended to mark the difference between God manifested in the flesh, and the invisible God, God the Father in heaven—in which character the address was made to him. But pass we on to the petitions themselves, and let us see whether they are not chiefly, whether they are not exclusively, appropriate to the state of Christ's dispensation as it then was.

For this purpose it will be only requisite to repeat the several clauses with the briefest comment:—" *Hallowed be thy name<sup>d</sup>.*" " *Thy kingdom come.*" The expressions cannot fail to bring us back most forcibly to a time, when the Gospel kingdom was not yet established; but was the one great object of Christ's preparatory labours, and of the labours of those his attendants, who were sent from time to time to preach that kingdom at hand. It was a petition for that moment to be hastened, when these preparations should be completed, and when he should be able to say, " I have glorified thee on the earth, I have finished the work which thou hast given me to do. *I have manifested thy name* to the men whom thou gavest me<sup>e</sup>." But to himself—to God *in his name*, were prayers to be addressed when that work was finished, and their petition granted. Therefore, he adds, " And now, O Father, glorify thou *me* with

<sup>d</sup> See note on the secondary meaning of the word Name, p. 150.

<sup>e</sup> Add *inter alia*, John xii. 28. " Father, glorify thy name. Then came a voice from heaven, saying, *I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again.* The people that stood by and heard it, said that it thundered; others said that an angel spoke unto him." What voice was this which sounded like the thunders of mount Sinai? and what did it signify, but that as from amidst those thunders God had glorified his name as Father and Creator, so would he again glorify it as Son and Redeemer. " This voice," added Jesus, " came not because of me, but for your sakes."

thine ownself, (*παρὰ σεαυτῶ,*) with the glory which I had with thee (*παρὰ σοί*) before the world was <sup>f</sup>.”

*Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven.*—This brings us still nearer to the closing scene of that which the Saviour called his work. When in agony in the garden of Gethsemane, and his mind was full of the cup of bitterness prepared for him, it was, “Thy will be done,” which closed his meditations<sup>g</sup>. Doubtless, then, to that mysterious and awful accomplishment of God’s will, this clause of the Lord’s Prayer related<sup>h</sup>. It was that will against the fulfilment of which human nature revolted<sup>i</sup>,

<sup>f</sup> John xvii. 5.

<sup>g</sup> His reproof to the apostles on this occasion was, “Could ye not watch with me one hour?” as if the object of their watching and of his was to a certain extent the same. In like manner, he sometimes prayed *with them alone*; and although in this remarkable scene he withdrew from them to pray, preparatory to a portion of his ministry in which he was the sole agent, and according to the prophet’s image, “trod the wine-press alone,” yet his injunction to them seems addressed to them as ministers and fellow-labourers. “Watch and pray, *that ye enter not into temptation.*” Matt. xxvi. 40, 41.

<sup>h</sup> Matt. xxvi. 39. Mark xiv. 36. Luke xxii. 42.

<sup>i</sup> “O, my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me!” What an agony of soul is conveyed in these words! Scarcely less affecting is his request to Peter and James and John to “tarry with him,” as if even their presence was a comfort to him in that tremendous hour of trial. “And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy. Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death, *tarry ye here and watch with me.*” Matt. xxvi. 37—39.

Satan tempted the Saviour, and his boldest apostle remonstrated, until our Lord rebuked him with a severity of expression denoting the extraordinary seriousness of the subject. “Get thee behind me, *Satan*, for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men<sup>k</sup>.” As if he had said, “This is the will of God,—pray that his will be done, instead of seeking conjointly with the evil one to thwart it.” In the same strain Peter himself afterwards spoke of the crucifixion, in his first address to the Jews; “Him being delivered by the determinate will and foreknowledge of God<sup>l</sup>, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain.” This, too, was the prophetic language of the Psalmist, “*Lo, I come, to do thy will, O God<sup>m</sup>.*”

Not that the disciples used this Prayer with a full comprehension of its import. They may have offered it up in humble faith; instructed, perhaps, as in the case of Peter, that the sacrifice of Christ was eminently and peculiarly the will of God, but not understanding how to reconcile it with their hopes, their affections, and their tenets respecting him. Still they might have used it, going on like Abraham with his son, and preparing for a sacrifice, which, as in his case, seemed to put an end to their best hopes, as well as to blight their tenderest affec-

<sup>k</sup> Matt. xvi. 23.

<sup>l</sup> *Βουλή*, our Bible translation is “counsel.” Acts ii. 23.

<sup>m</sup> Psalm xl. 7, 8.

tions: but supported by a confidence like Abraham's, that God would provide himself a victim—would find some way of doing what to them seemed impossible and inexplicable.

*Give us this day our daily bread.*—This might seem at first to be as applicable to the destitute condition of the apostles and disciples under the dispensation of the Spirit, as it was to them during the abode of the Lord amongst them. But their situation was, in truth, very different. Whilst our Lord was with them, they were miraculously provided as often as they stood in need; afterwards they were left to the ordinary means of maintaining themselves. Thus St. Paul boasts of working with his own hands, that he may not be chargeable to the society". But our Lord's disciples, whilst he was with them, were continually supplied, in their ministry more particularly, by the extraordinary interposition of God. It was the occasion of more than one miracle. Food, and even money, were thus provided; their garments in their journeys waxed not old, and their purses never failed. But nothing can more clearly mark the distinction, than our Lord's words to them, immediately before his apprehension, and when he was in the act of taking leave of them: "When I sent you forth without scrip or purse or shoes, lacked ye any thing? And they said, 'Nothing.' Then said he to them, *But*



now, he that hath scrip let him take it, and likewise his purse: and he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one °.”

*Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us.*—Forgiveness of injuries, as the means of fitting us to receive the forgiveness of God for our trespasses against him, is a precept which, so far from being confined to the apostles and disciples during our Lord’s life, was evidently inculcated as binding on all Christians in every age. “If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your father forgive your trespasses <sup>p</sup>.” A petition for forgiveness therefore, having reference to such an injunction, seems to form an exception to the general character of the Lord’s Prayer, in the present view of it. But, although the duty of forgiveness be of universal obligation, and although it be a preparatory requisite in the case of all, before they can properly ask God to forgive them; still, it is not usual in prayer, one might almost say that it is not becoming, to set forth the possession of this or any qualification; but rather humbly to suppress it, as better known and judged of by God than by his self-partial suppliant. Such was the difference between the prayers of two whom our Lord himself once described to his disciples, the one for their imitation, the other for a warning: the one recounting alms, fastings, and if not forgiveness of

° Luke xxii. 35, 36.

<sup>p</sup> Matt. vi. 15.



wrongs received, yet more than reparation for wrongs done ; the other regarding himself only as he was an offender, and expressing all in “ God be merciful to me a sinner.” A prayer then, setting forth any qualification in the suppliant, would not perhaps be consistent with the lesson so inculcated, unless there were some special and extraordinary reason for it, such as the particular character of the Lord’s Prayer may be expected to furnish. It is therefore not unreasonable to suppose, that this and the two next clauses, “ *Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil,*” related to those parts of Christ’s work, in which, although his apostles and coadjutors required much assistance, yet the trial and difficulty were most apparent in their Lord’s course. He was most obviously exposed to temptation, Satan employing every wile to turn him aside from the preparation which was going on through him and his agents the apostles and other disciples, for the establishment of that kingdom which was to come. But were the agents and ministers themselves likely to be unmolested, in their part of the same work, by the same tempter ? What said our Lord ? “ Watch and pray that ye enter not into *temptation* :” —and at the last, “ Ye are they which have continued with me in *my temptations* ; and I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me<sup>9</sup>.” But besides the ordinary attempts of Satan, Jesus

<sup>9</sup> Luke xxii. 28, 29.

was expressly *led into* the wilderness to be tempted. What he there withstood no mere human being can be thought capable of withstanding. Well, therefore, might those who had joined him in that work, from which the devil wished in that mysterious interview to seduce him, well might they be taught to pray, “Lead *us* not into temptation.” The meaning of such a request, indeed, can only be understood by reference to our Lord’s peculiar case; for ordinarily “no man is tempted of God.” Our Lord had been *led into temptation*, and left alone with the evil one. But he was more than man. With him it was a necessary trial. In his case therefore it was ordained. But how could his followers and coadjutors have escaped, if the same exercise of infernal art and power had been employed against them? Such an opportunity Satan we know did desire, and was disappointed through our Lord’s prayer of intercession, in the case of one at least. “Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you (*ὑμᾶς*) that he may *sift you as wheat*, but I have prayed for thee (*περὶ σοῦ*) that thy faith fail not<sup>†</sup>.” Why Peter most needed his prayers, the event sufficiently shews. That Peter escaped this extraordinary trial by the intercession of his Master, we know. That the temptation was connected with his ministry, as preacher of Christ crucified, is highly probable. His strong prejudice in favour of

<sup>†</sup> Luke xxii. 31, 32.

a temporal Messiah has already been noticed, as accounting for the severity with which our Lord on one occasion rebuked him. In the present instance, too, this warning was soon followed by his attempt to rescue Jesus by force, and probably to assert his right to temporal supremacy. "Put up thy sword," were the words with which Jesus recalled him to himself; he instantly obeyed. Christ had prayed for him, and his faith, even against hope, failed him not. He submitted to see his Master led to death, and Satan was disappointed of his victim. Still, as he followed and looked on, and saw no divine aid interposed in behalf of the forsaken Messiah, his heart misgave him, and his resolution gradually failed. The tempter was at hand, and the apostle had already denied him whose kingdom was now seen to be not of this world, when a look from Jesus roused and rescued him. In all this there is doubtless every appearance of an attempt directed by Satan against Peter, not merely as a member of the human race, but as the first foundation stone of that work, against which the chief agency of evil was directed. In his efforts to prevent or interrupt this work, the other apostles may be supposed likewise, although in different degrees, to have been the objects of his malicious schemes; and hence this clause of the Lord's Prayer, *Lead us not into temptation*, as well as the one following, "*Deliver us from evil, or from the evil one.*"

The same principle will lead us to the true meaning and intent of the former clause, "*Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us.*" Most sinned against was the Lord Jesus, and most conspicuous was his office of forgiving; when asked to heal, he forgave sins; when suffering on the cross, it formed the last act of his ministry; it was this, in short, for which he lived on earth, and for which he died. While on earth, the apostles were fellow-labourers with him in proclaiming that forgiveness, and in preparing men to receive it. But although joined with Christ thus far in his merciful work, and thus far partaking of his ministerial character, there was one especial difference. They needed of God that same forgiveness, which they were subordinate agents in procuring for mankind, and which they as such preached. Christ might pray simply that the scheme of forgiveness may prosper amongst the *objects of his ministry*; they were bound so to express their prayer for this, as to *include themselves*. The spirit of the petition from their lips might be, "Grant us that forgiveness, which we, in our capacity of agents and fellow-workers with the Lord, are proclaiming to others."—Their forgiving others was not assigned as a reason or claim on God's forgiveness of themselves, but renders their prayer more humble, by setting them on a level, as far as the right to salvation went, with those who were obstinately

refusing it; who were resisting their ministry, trespassing against them as ministers of Christ and stewards of the grace of God.

It would be uncandid, however, not to notice, that against this explanation there is one strong objection, nor do I at all desire to detract from its force. In St. Matthew's narrative of the institution of the Prayer, it is followed immediately by the observation, that in order to render our prayers for forgiveness effectual, we must first forgive all others; and to strengthen the connection, the particle "for" is used. This is strong, although by no means conclusive<sup>s</sup>. Other passages may be readily pointed out, in which sentences are thus strung together by one Evangelist, which, by comparison with the other narratives, we certainly conclude not to have been uttered together. In St. Luke the prayer is found disjoined from the precept<sup>t</sup>. In St. Mark, again, the precept is given and the prayer omitted<sup>u</sup>. St. Mark, indeed, introduces it as part of a regular exposition of that frame of mind which is suitable for a Christian prayer; and which is summarily described, by faith in God and charity to man.

The concluding sentence could scarcely have made part of the Prayer, as originally taught by our Saviour. In that Prayer, "thy kingdom come" is one of the petitions, in this sentence, the existence and establishment of that kingdom is asserted,

<sup>s</sup> Matt. vi. 14.

<sup>t</sup> Luke xi. 4.

<sup>u</sup> Mark xi. 25.



and a new sense required for the expression in the petition. When Christ taught the Prayer, his kingdom was not yet; the power with which his Church was to be strengthened from on high was not exercised<sup>x</sup>; nor the glory resumed, which he had with the Father before the world was. The concluding sentence of the Lord's Prayer was afterwards added, probably before the close of the apostolic age, and on apostolic authority, when the Prayer had been adopted as a form for all Christians. Hence the doubt and uncertainty, whether it be a genuine portion of the New Testament record, or not. Its want of support from the manuscripts is such, as to afford decisive proof that it is not; and yet some connection with apostolical authority, such as I have supposed, seems requisite to account for its having been so early and so generally appended to the Prayer, as used by all Chris-

<sup>x</sup> So St. Paul, (speaking of the exceeding greatness of God's power,) "which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places; far above all principality and power, and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come. And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the Church; which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all." (Ephes. i. 20—23.) To the *revelation* of this glorious state of Christ's power, the same apostle may be supposed to allude in his 2d Epistle to the Thessalonians, (i. 9.) when speaking of the condition of the disobedient at the last day, he describes them as undergoing ὅληθρον αἰώνιον, ἀπὸ προσώπου τοῦ Κυρίου, καὶ ἀπὸ τῆς δόξης τῆς ΙΣΧΥΟΣ αὐτοῦ.



tians, as well as for its having occasionally crept into the sacred text.

In assenting to this view of the Lord's Prayer, the pious Christian cannot but use it with a peculiar feeling of devotion. Although its original object and designation has been accomplished, still, like what befel the prophet's mantle, a new devotional spirit has been attached to it by the apostolic Church, and by God who has guided it. If the temple of Jerusalem had been converted into a house of Christian prayer, could any other edifice have furnished the like accidental excitements to devotion? Much more may we be allowed and expected to attach to a form of prayer so adopted, a character of sanctity, beyond all which have been subsequently framed for our peculiar use.

Besides, a further application of the Lord's Prayer (or, as it may be called, on the above principle, the *apostles' prayer*) is quite in unison with the general tenor of Christ's *temporary* measures; they were generally also *prospective*. This has been pointed out in the view of his *miracles* more especially; and in the present instance, if the institution of this Prayer involved, as has been suggested, a prophetic allusion and adaptation to the successive trials of the Church, its divine Author must have intended it to be preserved. In what way, the Church and the Holy Spirit within it knew best, and has doubtless best determined.

Subscription price, Five Dollars per Annum in Advance. Single Copies, Fifteen Cents.  
Entered as Second-Class Matter, October 3, 1917, Post Office at Chicago, Ill., under No. 102,363.  
Acceptance for mailing at special rate of postage provided for in Act of October 3, 1917.  
Postage paid at Chicago, Ill.

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## CHAP. II.

### PREACHING TO THE JEWS.

From A. D. 33—41.

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**SHALL** we say then that the period of the Christian dispensation, of that dispensation under which we now live, commences where our Lord's ministry closes? Such appears to be the case, that ministry being only preparatory: first, as forming and furnishing the subject of Christianity; secondly, as providing certain instruments, and making certain arrangements to facilitate the first measures of the Holy Spirit, whose office it was to Christianize the world.

The history of that great work naturally falls into a twofold division: the former portion extending through the period in which the Holy Guide and Governor of the Church effected his purpose by a manifest interference; by extraordinary gifts and endowments bestowed on his agents, and an extraordinary and sensible reception, and welcome, as it were, of all, who by their means were introduced into the new kingdom of God. In due season, this

manifest and sensible interference of the Holy Spirit was withdrawn, and has continued to be so unto the present day. The history of the latter period will be therefore treated separately from that of the former, because of this great line of division. In *that*, the extraordinary display of the Spirit was a necessary guide and beacon to direct men to the Church, and to keep them from wandering in their progress to it. It served a similar purpose with the pillar and cloud, which for a time were manifested to guide the Israelites to the earthly Canaan. In *this*, the kingdom being settled, although the God of the true Israel still resides amongst his people, that residence is secret and invisible—within a holy of holies—within the hearts of the faithful. Like the Jews, we only for a short season enjoyed the open and palpable symbol of God's guiding presence, but, like them, we were not left comfortless. “We have such an High Priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; a minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched and not man<sup>a</sup>,” and through him, and by him, we have access unto God.

It is the first of these periods, however, to which our attention must be now confined; that is, to Christianity as it was taught and conducted by the apostles and other *inspired* ministers of

<sup>a</sup> Heb. viii. 1, 2.

God. And here it will be proper to mark distinctly the breaks by which even this brief period is itself subdivided. For the new dispensation was not communicated to mankind at once, but gradually, and, it would seem, just in proportion as their weak and prejudiced minds could bear it. According to St. Paul's illustration, they were at first fed with milk, and as they gained strength truths harder of digestion were presented to them. It is quite necessary, therefore, to consider the records of the infant Church with reference to these stages, else we shall be continually startled by apparent inconsistencies: what is the subject of a command in one part, in another appearing, perhaps, as the subject of a prohibition, and what is at one time spoken of as a portion of Christian law, at another being disclaimed and disowned. What indistinctness and confusion, for instance, may be occasioned by the want of some such principle, in attempting to reconcile the decree of the council of Jerusalem, respecting the obligation of Gentile converts to adhere to certain portions of the Jewish ceremonial law, with those passages in St. Paul's writings which expressly condemn such a compliance as sinful?

Some allusion has been already made to this distinction of periods, which will now be more fully pointed out.

## I.

THE GOSPEL PREACHED TO THE JEWS  
ONLY.

The first instruction of the Holy Ghost was, like that of our Lord, addressed only to the Jews. Of this, the apostles were informed by our Saviour before he left them. “Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me, both in *Jerusalem*, and in *all Judæa*, and in *Samaria*, and unto the uttermost part of the earth<sup>a</sup>.” Precisely in this order was the course of their ministry directed. They preached at Jerusalem until Stephen’s martyrdom, and the persecution which ensued dispersed the brethren through the rest of Judæa and Samaria, in which places the word was of course next preached <sup>b</sup>.

## II.

THE GOSPEL PREACHED TO THE DEVOUT  
GENTILES.

Notwithstanding the frequent allusions of our Lord to this event, notwithstanding his last words respecting the extent of their preaching and witnessing even to the uttermost parts of the earth, the apostles were still as much in the dark on

<sup>a</sup> Acts i. 8.<sup>b</sup> A. D. 33—41.



the subject, as they had before been about his death and resurrection, after all his repeated declarations concerning both. As they formerly wondered what the rising from the dead could mean, so they now marvelled, what would be the explanation of the prophecy concerning the call of the Gentiles.

Of these Gentiles there were two descriptions; the idolatrous and unbelieving Gentiles, and those who were termed by the Jews proselytes of the gate. These latter are designated in the New Testament as “devout men,” “fearing God,” “testified of by the Jews<sup>c</sup>.” They were those who, in consequence of the dispersion of the Jews through their respective countries, had renounced idolatry, and had become worshippers of the one true God. As a sign and pledge of this change of belief, they conformed to some few observances of the Jewish law. Like the Jews and proselytes of righteousness, they abstained from things offered unto idols, and never used blood as food, or the flesh of any animal strangled, as retaining the blood. In opposition, perhaps, to a very general corruption of the moral perception in this respect, they also bound themselves to consider fornication as an offence against the law of God; and, of course, as such to abstain from it. Other portions of the moral code being already acknowledged by the Gentiles

<sup>c</sup> Acts x. 2, 22.

in common with the Jews, were probably on that account not formally enjoined on them.

Next in order to the Jews, it was reasonable that the Gospel should be preached to these, both as being better prepared than the idolaters to receive it, and also because the prejudices of the Jewish converts were less likely to be startled, than if all Gentiles had been at once called. For, if the apostles themselves were at first unable to bear this hard truth, what may we suppose to have been the case with the great mass of Christians? The event, indeed, fully justifies the wisdom of God in this gradual disclosure of his scheme. Although it was not until the seventh year of the Holy Spirit's descent, that any steps were taken for the admission even of the devout Gentiles, yet it was necessary to prepare one apostle especially for the opening of this commission; and this too, after having so frequently exercised him by divine impulses, as to render him of all others the least liable to mistake, or to distrust its suggestions, and the rest more likely, from the conspicuous part he had taken, to confide now in his assurance. Even at this late period then, it was necessary that the Gentile Cornelius, although a man who "feared God and all his house<sup>d</sup>," and could appeal for his character to the Jews themselves, should be emboldened by a special revelation to seek for

<sup>d</sup> Acts x. 2.

admission into the Church; and that Peter, by a corresponding vision, should be required to lay aside his scruples, and be taught then for the first time to see, that God having cleansed the Gentiles, they were to be received on a footing with the clean and holy Israelites. The pains which he was at to justify his conduct to the Church of Jerusalem, and the opposition which he subsequently encountered, prove the delicate nature of his commission, and the need of some extraordinary and special interference of the Holy Ghost to enforce it. The time which elapsed from the descent of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost to the conversion of Cornelius, forms what may be termed the first period in the dispensation of the Spirit. From this, again to the further extension of the Gospel kingdom, forms a second distinct period, extending from A. D. 41. to A. D. 45.

### III.

#### THE GOSPEL PREACHED TO THE IDOLATROUS GENTILES \*.

At that time Paul and Barnabas were called on by a special revelation to undertake an extension of spiritual conquest and dominion, far beyond that with which Peter had been commissioned. It was then seen that the fulness of the time was come for

\* Acts xiii. 1—3.

the offer of salvation to the Gentile idolaters. What preparation Barnabas had for this great attempt, we are not informed. It is only said, that he was a "good man, full of faith and of the Holy Ghost<sup>f</sup>." But of St. Paul, as of St. Peter, a special and distinct revelation is recorded: one, indeed, more solemn and mysterious, because involving what he describes as "the mystery, which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men<sup>g</sup>," whereof he was made minister. This was the dispensation of the grace of God which was given unto him, and for a right view of which he was taken up into the third heaven<sup>h</sup>.

That his apostleship to the Gentiles was conferred on him in his second visit to Jerusalem, and by the revelation which he describes as having then received in the temple, is evident from the terms of the command addressed to him, "Make haste and get thee quickly out of Jerusalem, for *they* will not receive *thy testimony* concerning me:" and again, "Depart, for I will send thee *far hence* to the Gentiles<sup>i</sup>," "delivering thee from the people and from the Gentiles, *unto whom now I send thee*; to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God<sup>k</sup>;" allusions which are manifestly applicable to the idolatrous Gentiles only. For, as to the devout

<sup>f</sup> Acts xi. 24.<sup>g</sup> Eph. iii. 5.<sup>h</sup> 2 Cor. xii. 2.<sup>i</sup> Acts xxii. 18, 21.<sup>k</sup> Acts xxvi. 17, 18.

Gentiles, Peter and Paul himself, had for many years been preaching to them ; nor could they be said so properly to be in darkness and under the power of Satan. His appointment, in conjunction with Barnabas, by the Church of Antioch, took place not long after, and, as we know, by the especial command of the Holy Ghost.

From this time the ministry of the Spirit appears to have been directed to three distinct orders of persons ; each of which required some slight difference of discipline and government, although the doctrines of Christianity were alike imparted to all. The Jews compose the first, whether Jews by birth or proselytism. To these, and it would seem to these alone, ministered all the apostles, except Peter, Paul, and Barnabas, who had also special commissions. The second are the devout Gentiles, who were first intrusted to the ministry of Peter, and afterwards included in Paul's charge also. The last are the idolatrous Gentiles, to whom Paul and Barnabas alone of all the apostles were sent, but more especially, as it would seem from the memoirs of their labours, Paul.

This stage in the administration of the Spirit will be found to comprehend a period of twenty-five years, extending from A. D. 45, when St. Paul received his apostleship, to A. D. 70, when Jerusalem was taken, the Jewish polity dissolved, and the grounds on which the above-mentioned distinctions were founded were for ever removed.



*The appointment of Matthias to be an apostle<sup>1</sup>.*

Between the ascension of our Lord and the coming of the Comforter, a short interval of ten days occurs, during which the only measure taken for the furtherance of Christianity was the election of an apostle in the room of Judas. This pause in the work of God may have been intended, to mark more strongly the distinction, between the former and latter ministration—that of Jesus which was now completed, and that of the Comforter which was to succeed. That this intermission was not accidental, at least, but part of the general scheme of Providence, was expressly declared to the disciples by their Master. They remained inactive by his command<sup>m</sup>.

This interval then was only marked by the repair of that portion of the Church's preparatory structure which had been injured by the fall of Judas. An apostle was wanting to complete "the twelve," as they were emphatically styled. Peter accordingly proposed to his fellow apostles and the other disciples, (who, to the number of one hundred and twenty men, were collected in an upper room, for fear of the Jews,) the expediency—or shall we rather say, he explained to them, that it was the will of heaven—that another disciple should supply the vacancy? As yet, it must be borne in mind, of the two offices of an apostle, that only with which

<sup>1</sup> Acts i. 26.

<sup>m</sup> Luke xxiv. 49. Acts i. 4.



they had been invested by Christ was known. As yet they were only witnesses, or, as they are often called, in allusion to the most material circumstance in their evidence, “witnesses of the resurrection<sup>a</sup>.” Two, therefore, qualified for this office by their constant attendance on the Lord, were presented as candidates; and the choice fell on Matthias in preference to Joseph, who was surnamed Barsabas.

The mode in which this election was conducted has not been viewed in the same light by all, the sacred narrative admitting, certainly, great variety of interpretation. Mosheim supposes that the election was made by the suffrages of the assembled Christians, the apostles having previously nominated the candidates<sup>b</sup>. Others understand the nomination to have been made by the assembly, and the decision by the rival candidates drawing lots. This latter, which is the more usual view of it, seems also, on a careful consideration of all the circumstances, to be the true one. For,

First, the election is expressly referred to the Lord who had himself appointed all the other apostles, and who, even after the dispensation of the Spirit had commenced, manifested himself when a further apostolic appointment was to be made. They prayed and said, “Thou, Lord, who knowest

<sup>a</sup> Acts i. 8, 22.

<sup>b</sup> De Rebus Christianorum ante Const. Magn. p. 78.

the hearts of all men shew whether of these two *thou hast chosen*<sup>p</sup>." Add to this, that the assembly was not inspired, for the Holy Ghost was not yet given, and therefore could not know what was the divine will and pleasure. Mosheim's conjecture throughout proceeds on a forgetfulness of this circumstance, which makes this so materially to differ from any congregation of primitive Christians assembled after the descent of the Spirit. Whether the apostles or the assembly proposed the two candidates—a point which the narrative leaves doubtful—cannot with this view of the case then be of any moment<sup>q</sup>.

<sup>p</sup> Acts i. 24.

<sup>q</sup> The terms of the narrative strongly favour the popular opinion and militate against Mosheim's; notwithstanding his proposed accommodation of the text to his view. In the phrase *ἔδωκαν κλήρους αὐτῶν* he reads *αὐτῶν*. But the chief obstacle lies not here, but in the construction of the sentence contained in ver. 26. In our translation it is, "the lot fell on Matthias *and* he was numbered with the eleven." The meaning of the former part of the sentence in the original is more properly, perhaps, "the office fell to Matthias." But this does not affect the point to which I am adverting, which is, that the two acts are given as separate. First comes the choice or election of Matthias, and then his being numbered with the eleven. Now the Greek word, which has been rendered "numbered with," is *συγκατεψηφίσθη*: a word which expresses the act of an assembly, and that by vote, *ψηφός*. Is it not, then, natural to conclude that St. Luke meant to say, that Matthias having been first chosen by the Lord's extraordinary interference, the assembly *joined in* or *followed up* the election, (for that is the force of the *σὺν* in *συγκατεψηφίσθη*.) Their proceeding with certain *forms* after the election had taken place, no more implied that they were the *electors*, than the usage of

Another still more cogent reason there is for considering the question of the nomination immaterial, as to any argument which may be founded on it respecting the constitution of the primitive assemblies. *The rule was laid down*, according to which the qualification for a candidate was to be ascertained. So that whether the expression "they appointed" (ἐστῆσαν) refers to the apostles, or to the whole assembly, it seems certain, that they did no more than ascertain who, out of all then present, possessed the great qualification for an apostle,—the claim of having been constantly in attendance on the Lord from his baptism until his death. What if Matthias and Barsabas were the only two of that whole assembly who, besides the apostles, were so circumstanced? This is indeed extremely probable. First, because the number of those who had been constantly with Jesus from the very beginning of his ministry could not have been very great. Secondly, because those few, being from that very circumstance more known and marked by the Jews, and more certainly obnoxious to persecution, would be the most likely to

the Holy Ghost's descent after baptism, authorizes us to explain away the account of Cornelius's baptism, because in this instance it preceded it. A case directly in point is that of St. Paul, who was, like Matthias, an apostle especially appointed "by the will of God and not of man," yet it was, doubtless, after that appointment that he was invested with the office by the Church of Antioch, and by prayer and imposition of hands commended to the grace of God.

flee and disperse on the crucifixion of Jesus so far, as not yet to have returned to their little society. The apostles (independently of that very constancy which might have qualified them for the office) were detained by an extraordinary sense of duty, by affection, and by other motives which could not so forcibly operate on the rest. Supposing then that two only were found, these two had given proof of possessing, beyond the qualification mentioned by Peter, a superior constancy, faithfulness, and disregard of personal risk, which were qualities equally essential to the office which was to be filled. Of these then, Matthias was chosen and Joseph left. But both would seem to have been tried and proved for the situation. And if the general report of the early Church be true, Joseph indeed was only rejected for a season. Barnabas, the fellow-labourer and fellow-apostle of Paul, has been commonly identified with this same Joseph, who was also called Barsabas. Nor is it unreasonable to suppose that tradition highly likely to be true, which states, that of all who were competent witnesses besides the eleven, the only two who gave proof of apostolical faithfulness and fearlessness became advanced to the rank and office of apostles,—the one supplying a vacancy in the number of those more especially sent to the Jews, the other joined in a commission to the Gentiles.

It appears then that this interruption in the

Sabbath time, as it were, of God's great work, the interval between the ascension of Christ and the coming of the Holy Ghost, was not properly a continuance of that work, but only the repair of what was broken by the sin and death of Judas. And it was appointed, perhaps, that the election of Matthias should take place in this interval, in order that the Holy Ghost might on the day of Pentecost fall on him with the same effects as on the other apostles; they, as will appear in the sequel, being affected by the descent of the Spirit differently from the great body of Christians.

*Descent of the Holy Ghost*<sup>r</sup>, (A. D. 33.)

The descent of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost naturally leads us to call to mind the object and design of that holyday among the Jews, presuming, that as their passover contained so much instructive allusion to the death of Christ, we may learn from this also a similar lesson respecting the descent of the Comforter.

Fifty days from the paschal sacrifice was the feast of Pentecost<sup>s</sup>; the same period intervened from the sacrifice of Christ to the descent of the Holy Ghost. In the former, the rite of the Passover reminded the observers of a temporal salvation and deliverance; the feast of Pentecost, of the law

<sup>r</sup> Acts ii.      <sup>s</sup> Exod. xxiii. 15, 16.



given to those so rescued and saved by God himself speaking from mount Sinai. Christ had been the new and the true Passover, and, in like manner and after a like interval, our Passover was followed up by the promulgation of a new law, delivered also by God himself.

By means of this contrast, we may see more clearly the distinction which has been drawn between the ministry of Jesus and of the Holy Spirit. With the delivery of the law from mount Sinai commenced the Mosaic dispensation; with the Christian Pentecost that under which we now live. In each case, all that preceded was *preparatory*; the signs, miracles, and other acts which authenticated the commission of Moses, and those which bore witness to that greater Prophet who “arose like unto him<sup>t</sup>,” the blood of the lamb which saved the Israelites from the destroyer, as well as the sacrifice of him who by his blood has saved us all from destruction<sup>u</sup>.

With the records of that day the Christian reader needs not to be instructed here; nor does it enter

<sup>t</sup> Deut. xviii. 15—18: Acts iii. 22.

<sup>u</sup> As if to impress the importance of the analogy on our attention, we are not simply told that the descent of the Holy Ghost took place on the day of Pentecost, for then might the reader have overlooked the coincidence as casual; but the narrative is prefaced in a pointed and particular way, “When the day of Pentecost was fully come;” and thence St. Luke proceeds to detail the glorious and gracious manifestation of the Spirit, in this solemn entrance on its office.



into my plan, on this or any other part of the inspired history, to attempt a substitute for the narratives of the Bible. I am only like the travellers' guide, pointing out the remarkable features of a venerable portrait, and placing the observer in the most favourable light for seeing them, and not making sketches or copies for persons who want the opportunity or the inclination frequently to visit the original. This kind of assistance, however, the present occasion more especially requires. For the history of Christianity being the history of the dispensation of God's Spirit, it is proper that together with the notice of the Holy Ghost's first manifestation as the guide and dispenser of religion, there should be given whatever hints may seem useful to shew the connection between the incidents recorded in that history, and the guiding wisdom of that holy One,—in other words, to clear away all that might hinder the events preserved in the Scriptures from being contemplated as parts of the scheme of the divine Dispenser, and that scheme itself from appearing fully adapted to the purposes for which it was framed, and which it has so signally answered. The first point to which with this view I would advert, is,

I. *The distinction between the modes whereby the Holy Ghost was communicated, and its effects manifested on the members of the primitive Church.* Now this was done in two ways; either, as in this first instance, *immediately and visibly*, or *by the laying on*

of the apostle's hands, when the communication was secret and invisible. In the former case, a flame shaped like a tongue was seen to descend, and rest on the persons so favoured, and the descent is therefore said to be *visible*, that is, *accompanied with a visible sign*. For God himself no man hath seen at any time<sup>x</sup>; and these fiery tongues, like the flame in the bush at Horeb, and that of the Shechinah, only denoted a *peculiar character* in the several communications which were accompanied by such tokens. Simple and obvious as is this view of the subject, it is requisite to keep it distinctly before us, because there has arisen much confusion of thought, not to say impiety of doctrine, from mistaking, as it would seem, the various modes in which it has pleased God to provide an intercourse between himself and his creatures, for views of his real nature. In the old world it led to idolatry; men associating, and gradually blending in idea, the God of nature with those of his works, which were his most conspicuous witnesses, or tokens of his presence, the heavens and the earth, the heavenly bodies, and the seasons<sup>y</sup>. Each successive revelation has been employed in dispersing the error and obscurity with which man has thus contrived ever to darken the light of the preceding one. But, with

<sup>x</sup> John i. 18. 1 John iv. 12.

<sup>y</sup> Thus, the brazen serpent, which Moses set up in the wilderness by the command of God, was converted into an object of idolatry. See 2 Kings xviii. 4.

the progress of each new day-spring, fresh clouds have gathered, nor has the Christian dispensation itself escaped. From the earliest controversies, even to those of the present day, disputes have been blindly carried on concerning the Divine essence, by parties alike acknowledging that it is incomprehensible, and alike forgetting that God reveals not *himself* properly, but his will, to man; that what is said to be a revelation of the Divine nature, is often rather a warning not to seek after the knowledge, inasmuch as it chiefly tells us what God is not; and that what positive knowledge of God is to be found in Scripture, seems to be placed there, like the forbidden tree of Paradise, not to gratify man's presumptuous curiosity, but to try his obedience, and to animate his exertions, not as an object of present fruition, but of future reward. "The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us, and to our children for ever, *that we may do all the words of this law*<sup>d</sup>."

Thus, when it is written that God appeared to Moses in the bush, our first, unthinking apprehension may be, that *an object of sight* before *invisible* was then *made visible*. But then, a moment's reflection reminds us, that "no man hath seen God at any time;" and we learn to consider the ex-

<sup>d</sup> Deut. xxix. 29.

pression as an accommodation of language like “the wrath of God,” “the counsels of God,” and even the “eye” and the “arm” of the Lord<sup>e</sup>. On the other hand, if we chance to overlook this, it is impossible to say how far we may go wrong. To return, however, to the immediate point of inquiry.

The descent of the Holy Ghost, when accompanied with this sign, must have been what our Saviour meant when he spoke to the apostles of being baptized with fire and the Holy Ghost. It was manifested only on some great occasion; and appears to have produced effects, if not always greater in kind, certainly greater in degree, than when the communication was made through the mediation of the apostles. Those who were thus favoured, were, by way of distinction from the others, said to be “filled with the Holy Ghost,” and probably, from their superior spiritual endowments, formed the class out of which all elections were made to the higher offices in the Church. It was so, *e. g.* in the case of the seven Deacons, whose appointment is recorded in the sixth chapter of the Acts, and in that of Barnabas. Through this “baptism” all the apostles (St. Paul, it would seem, no less than the others) passed; and by virtue of it *they* certainly obtained gifts greater, not in degree only, but in kind, as we shall presently observe.

<sup>e</sup> See Abp. King’s Sermon on Predestination.

There are only five occasions on which the Holy Ghost seems to have been thus communicated, and in each there was some great object to be effected, some signal event to be marked. First, it occurred on the day of Pentecost<sup>f</sup>. Next, on the return of the apostles from the Jewish council to their brethren<sup>g</sup>, (τοὺς ἰδιούς.) The third extraordinary descent was on St. Paul<sup>h</sup>, for, although this is not expressly stated, it may be certainly inferred, as well from the expressions, that he was “filled with the Holy Ghost,” and was “not a whit behind the chiefest of the apostles,” as from the uniformity observed in the mode of appointing and empowering the apostles in other respects. If our Lord thought it good to return to the earth, in order that St. Paul’s appointment to be a witness might be altogether the same as was that of the others, it is more than likely that he was invested with his second apostolical office, the ministry of the Spirit, by the same peculiarity of the Spirit’s manifestation as were his fellow ministers. The fourth occasion was the admission of the first devout Gentiles or proselytes of the gate unto the Church<sup>i</sup>. The fifth and last time of its occurring, as far as sacred testimony goes, was at Antioch in Pisidia, on the first fruits of the idolatrous Gentiles<sup>k</sup>. In this case, also, as in St. Paul’s, it is only to be inferred from

<sup>f</sup> Acts ii. 1.<sup>g</sup> Acts iv. 31.<sup>h</sup> Acts ix. 17.<sup>i</sup> Acts x. 45.<sup>k</sup> Acts xiii. 14, 52.



the occasion being strictly analogous to that of the conversion of the first devout Gentiles, taken in connection with the peculiar expression which is used in the narrative of that event, *viz.* that “they were filled with the Holy Ghost,” an expression which certainly seems to have been appropriated to this mode of communication<sup>1</sup>.

On all other occasions, the descent of the Holy Ghost was such as our Lord alluded to, when he said to Nicodemus, “The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit<sup>m</sup>.” In other words, its operation was not accompanied by any impression on the senses. It was known only *by its effects*. But, the effects themselves being partly sensible and extraordinary, it was still in one sense a palpable communication. The apostles

<sup>1</sup> St. Luke seems to apply the phrase to cases wherein *immediate utterance* was the result—to the *overflowings*, as it were, of the Spirit. In like manner heathen writers use the expression *plenus deo*. Accordingly, whilst in the Acts it is confined (as it would seem) to the instances of the Holy Ghost’s descent which were marked by the symbol of fiery tongues, and the gift of languages, which it typified, in the Gospel, it is applied to Zacharias, whose inspiration was manifested by an extemporaneous and divinely suggested hymn. So too John Baptist is said to have been filled with the Holy Ghost from his mother’s womb, to denote, by the strong expression, what is elsewhere described by “*a voice crying out, Prepare ye the way of the Lord.*”

<sup>m</sup> John iii. 8.



laid their hands on the disciples, and the Holy Ghost was given. The gifts which followed in this, as in the former case, were various, and imparted in different degrees, as will be more distinctly pointed out as we proceed. It does not appear, however, to have been attended with all the effects or gifts of the Spirit ; as, for instance, the power of conferring the Holy Ghost, which was confined to the apostles, and therefore conveyed by the former manifestation of the Comforter. The gifts which it did convey were probably too imparted in a lower degree.

This communication of the Spirit appears to have been dispensed indiscriminately to all believers. All who were baptized, either at the time of their baptism, or as soon afterwards as an opportunity offered, were favoured through the apostles with "some spiritual gift." Hence the desire so earnestly expressed by St. Paul, to be with the Romans, in order to impart to them this their right and privilege". The members of the Roman Church

" " I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, *to the end that ye may be established.*" Rom. i. 11. Many other texts of Scripture may be added, in confirmation of this view, *e. g.* the same apostle, in Ephes. i. 13, 14, speaks *generally* of believers, that they "were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the *earnest* of our inheritance." St. John's words are still more applicable : "hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath *given* us of his Spirit." 1 John iv. 13.

had been baptized, but not by an apostle; and had as yet therefore no opportunity of receiving this seal of their baptism—this evidence, which it was thought good to grant to every member of the early Church, to satisfy him that he was indeed a portion of that edifice which was the temple of the Holy Ghost—that the descent of the Spirit, the natural ordinary and proper descent, was real, although insensible. So to the Israelites, the pillar of fire, and the flame of the Shechinah, were long left visible even to all, until a belief in the divine presence amongst them had been not only proved as an object of faith, but familiarized into an habitual impression.

Various terms occur in the New Testament expressive of the offices and powers with which the Holy Spirit thus invested the members of the primitive Church. We read of the word of wisdom, and the word of knowledge, of prophecy, discerning of spirits, the utterance and the interpretation of languages, besides teaching, faith, and several other names which served the temporary purpose of marking a minute subdivision of ministerial qualifications, which it would be impossible, as it is unnecessary, for us now to ascertain°. To a certain extent, however, this enumeration of gifts is not unedifying to succeeding ages. In the number of persons gifted, and still more, perhaps, in the distribution of

° 1 Cor. xii. 4—10.

endowments, we are presented at least with a fact, which makes it morally impossible that the inspired persons could either have imposed on themselves or on others. When enthusiasm and fanaticism spread themselves, the symptoms are uniform. That morbid sympathy, which is, as it were, the moral conductor of the delusion, requires that it should be so. One man's pretension to "discern spirits," may act on the heated imagination of another, until that other supposes that he too is endowed with the same faculty; but this would never lead him to fancy himself learned in a foreign language. On considering the manner, too, in which the various terms are used, together with their previous and ordinary import, we are not a little guided in our view of the economy of the Christian society, during this interesting period of its incompleteness and infancy, and are enabled to distinguish the characteristic endowments of those at least who held the highest rank. Some occasional use will accordingly be made of this source of information. The word of wisdom, for instance, may be fairly interpreted to mean, that insight into the true import of Christ's ministry which it pertained to the apostles more especially to possess, and which, as was before observed, they were without, until they received it of the Spirit. Such an interpretation is fair and reasonable; because St. Paul speaks of it as "the hidden wisdom," as if to intimate, that it comprised things either not before revealed, or not so revealed as

to be at the time comprehended. One of these points, and the most remarkable, is called, by the same apostle, “the wisdom of God.” “We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block, but unto them which are called, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God<sup>p</sup>.” Again, there can be little doubt that the word of knowledge was an expression used to denote sacred lore—knowledge of the scheme of past Revelations recorded in Scripture, their reference to Christianity, and, perhaps, their connection and extension through futurity, such as appears in the Revelations of St. John. This gift is accordingly described, both as unlocking the Scriptures of the prophets, wherein was “the mystery that was kept from ages, but was then made manifest<sup>q</sup>,” and also as that whereby the ancient prophets had foreseen this mystery.

Without pursuing these remarks further, it may be sufficient to observe, that these two gifts of wisdom and of prophecy seem to have been peculiar to the apostles, and to have been distinguished, the former from teaching, the latter from prophecy, on this very account; the apostles possessing so much clearer views of Christ’s ministry and of the future state of the Church, as to entitle their endowments to names distinct from teaching and prophecy.

<sup>p</sup> 1 Cor. i. 23, 24.

<sup>q</sup> Rom. xvi. 25, 26. Coloss. i. 26.

The event which suggested these remarks was the descent of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost, filling the apostles and their company each with his proper gifts. This then being the first, not only of the five manifestations of the Spirit, but of all its manifestations as guide and Comforter, the propriety of a visible and symbolical descent is easily perceived. It has been already observed, that the office of apostle was twofold: first, he had an appointment from Christ as his witness; secondly, he was ordained by the Holy Ghost as minister of the word—expounder and preacher of the word of wisdom and the word of knowledge. In his former capacity, he bore testimony to *facts*, which he was qualified to do whether he understood the import of those facts or not. In his second office, he became also an expounder of the *true character* of those facts. To qualify the apostles for the former, it was requisite, for their own satisfaction, that they should be in constant attendance on the Lord<sup>r</sup>; for that of others, that they should possess the power of working miracles.

<sup>r</sup> What good end was probably attained, by qualifying them to be witnesses of the facts before they were even moderately acquainted with the doctrines depending on them? The question may be partly answered, by considering how important it was that the apostles should not begin to preach Christianity too soon. With this object in view, whenever our Lord was more than usually explicit with them or with others, his disclosure was accompanied with a charge “that they should tell no man.” Matt. xvi. 20. xvii. 9. Mark viii. 30. ix. 9.



Both these qualifications therefore they derived from our Lord himself. At his command they left all and followed him while on earth, and before his departure received the power of performing signs and wonders. Still, as the office of *testifying* was not to begin until the new dispensation was opened by the Spirit, they were commanded to wait for that event. So that the first descent of the Holy Ghost, appears to have been made in its most illustrious and striking form, first as a sign that that great period was come, and next for the purpose of ordaining the apostles as the chief ministers of the Spirit. To this ordination our Lord may have alluded, when he told them and others that they should be “baptized with the baptism wherewith he had been baptized<sup>s</sup> ;” and also when he spoke of a kingdom for the apostles, as his Father had prepared one for him ; and promised that they should sit upon thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel<sup>t</sup>.

From this period the apostles and their fellow-labourers appear in their full course of duty. On a single address from Peter, three thousand were converted, baptized, and gifted with the Holy Ghost, and thereby admitted to the constant instruction of the apostles, and the communion of the Church<sup>u</sup>. These religious duties were performed in private

<sup>s</sup> Matt. xx. 23. Mark x. 39.

<sup>t</sup> Luke xxii. 29, 30.

<sup>u</sup> Acts ii. 41.

houses<sup>x</sup>, and by them as *Christians*. Nevertheless, as *Jewish* citizens they continued to frequent the

<sup>x</sup> Κατ' οἶκον, as opposed to the temple service, of which mention is made immediately after.

The expression, taken in connection with the existing circumstances of the Church, may however imply more, as the following considerations shew. At this time the believers were more in number than three thousand, and besides the regular increase which was going on from day to day, about five thousand were shortly after added at once. Now it is impossible that any one private house (and those of the Christians must have been among the humblest) could have had an upper room, or any place within its precincts, capable of containing so large a number. And if any such house there were, still it is equally difficult to understand how such a crowd of suspected persons should have been allowed, in the irritable state of the Jewish Antichristian spirit, to assemble thus regularly for prayer and other Christian intercourse.

Is it not likely, or rather certain, that the Church almost from the first must have been divided into several congregations? If so, each must have had one at least to preside, and also some one place of worship.

This supposition furnishes a key to many expressions of the New Testament, some of which are of no very obvious import. St. Paul is said before his conversion to have gone κατὰ τοὺς οἶκους, haling men and women to prison. Now, where was an inquisitor so likely to go in search of Christians, as into their ordinary places of meeting; and what would more naturally express these than the term τοὺς οἶκους, *the houses*, i. e. the houses of prayer. St. Paul sends to the Corinthians, the salutation of Aquila and Priscilla and of "the Church which is in their house." May it not here too be meant that theirs was a house so used, that it served the purpose of a church, and was appropriated to a particular congregation? Similar expressions, suggesting the same interpretation, will readily occur to the reader of the New Testament.

But, now, if this be so, what shall be said of the assembly of the whole Church, such as took place at Jerusalem when the famous decree was issued? Supposing such an assembly to have

temple. Thus Peter and John when they wrought the celebrated miracle on the man lame from his

been held *sub dio*, (for no private room could have contained them,) still it is almost absurd to suppose that their meeting would have been allowed to proceed without molestation; and the more public we suppose such a meeting to be rendered from the numbers composing it, the greater the difficulty.

One solution naturally presents itself, Why may not some one order in the Church have been called the Church κατ' ἐξοχὴν,—have conducted the internal affairs of the whole society of which they were a part,—have represented it in its intercourse with other Churches? Perhaps each presiding elder took the sense of his own congregation, and then the matter in question was decided by a meeting of these elders and the apostles. The apostles themselves might either have belonged to some one privileged congregation, such as the original one hundred and twenty, or have been divided. The latter is the more probable. Peter and John are said to have returned after their release from prison εἰς τοὺς ἰδίους, and perhaps their preaching together may have arisen from this very circumstance, that they were attached to the same congregation.

But again, if the assemblies of the primitive Christians were held in separate houses, what shall we say of the descent of the Holy Spirit on the return of Peter and John from the Sanhedrim? Was it a partial favour, and not extended to the whole Church? This follows necessarily, and is in itself not unlikely. A particular manifestation of God's Spirit, in which the endowments conferred were of a superior kind, was likely to be limited. Certainly the term τοὺς ἰδίους, which is used to denote the congregation to which they returned, seems to imply a particular class of Christians. Those who consider it to have been formed out of the original one hundred and twenty, will see an obvious reason for the privilege in the circumstance, that they were fellow-labourers with the apostles and fellow-disciples of the Lord Jesus himself. At all events, it would be nothing strange, that this sign should be given only to that congregation, to which those apostles were attached, whose ministry was the occasion of it.

birth, did it as they were entering the beautiful gate at the hour of prayer<sup>y</sup>. This and other instances which will occur to the reader of the history of the apostles, clearly shew that, for a time, that is, as long as Jerusalem and the Jewish polity remained, Jewish converts were expected to conform to the ceremonials of the law; not indeed as *Christians*, but agreeably to the spirit of Christianity, which interfered not with existing institutions, further than they were incompatible with the Gospel faith and practice. The Jew remained, as far as regarded conformity to the customs and habits of his country and sect, still a Jew, even after his conversion. The devout Gentile likewise, although received into the Christian society, was still not only permitted but enjoined to retain his customs as proselyte of the gate, and as such to abstain from things offered to idols, and from blood<sup>z</sup>. The converted idolater, on the other hand, was left free to eat of meat offered to idols, and to violate also the mere ceremonial parts of God's superseded dispensation. To have attached any spiritual grace to these ordinances would, indeed, in the Jewish convert have been a sin, and was forbidden; to have sought a fuller participation in the Jewish ceremonies and ritual communion, under an idea that they could render "the comers thereunto perfect<sup>a</sup>," would have been equally sinful in the con-

<sup>y</sup> Acts iii. 1.      <sup>z</sup> Acts xv. 20.      <sup>a</sup> Heb. x. 1.

verted proselyte of the gate; and the converted idolater also, although free to eat of meat offered to idols, and, in short, to enjoy from the first the full "liberty" of the Gospel of Christ, sinned, if there were so much of the taint of old superstition remaining on his mind, as to make him feel, that while he eat and associated with the revellers, an evil being was receiving his homage—or that while he was indulging in any act, indifferent and innocent in itself, it was too strongly associated in his mind with guilty meaning, to be indifferent and innocent *to him*<sup>b</sup>. Regard to the feelings of weaker and more scrupulous brethren might in some instances render more restraint requisite, but these were the main clauses of the charter of Christian liberty, as it stood before the destruction of Jerusalem.

*Second extraordinary manifestation of the Holy Ghost<sup>c</sup>.*

The wonderful success of Peter's first address, and the effect of the miracle which had been wrought by the hands of John and himself, soon aroused the attention of the Jewish rulers. The cripple whose limbs had been restored, clinging round the apostles, detained them as they were proceeding to join the public service, while the

<sup>b</sup> 1 Cor. viii. 7.

<sup>c</sup> Acts iii. and iv. 1—33.



people as they arrived for the same purpose flocked round and formed a crowd. The high priest and chief police officer, hearing the disturbance, came out; and, assisted by the Sadducees, seized the persons who appeared to them to be the cause of all the tumult and interruption of the public worship. Peter was already far advanced in a harangue, in which, as in the last, he was fulfilling his office of witness, and inviting his countrymen to baptism in the name of Jesus, when John and himself were arrested and imprisoned. Next morning they were brought before the rulers and elders, who had assembled at Jerusalem for examination of the culprits. The man whose lameness had been removed was in attendance, and his evidence secured them from the charge of imposture. But the influence which their doctrine was gaining, was more alarming to the council, than any crime which could have been laid to their charge. Three thousand converts had been made by their first appeal; by this second, notwithstanding the interruption, five thousand more were added: and in the interval no day had passed without the Holy Spirit giving proof of divine power and care, in bringing those qualified into the Church. They were dismissed therefore from the council, with repeated warnings, that if they continued to preach "as witnesses of Jesus" they did it at their peril. It was on their return to their party, and while all were engaged in prayer and thanksgiving, that the symbol of the

Spirit's communication was recognized, and his second descent was manifested<sup>d</sup>.

An extraordinary display on this occasion was obviously in unison with the rest of that divine Person's ministry. Thus it fell on the first devout Gentile converts. Thus it fell also (as we have endeavoured to prove) at Antioch in Pisidia, on the first idolaters who embraced Christianity. The first fruits of the Jewish conversion would naturally seem to require a corresponding blessing and honouring of the Spirit.

Of those on whom this descent of the Comforter (τοῦ Παρακλήτου) produced the most striking effects, Barnabas was so conspicuous as to derive his familiar name from the circumstance, (υἱὸς παρακλήσεως,) and to deserve especial notice from the brief historian of the event<sup>e</sup>. Beyond the gifts bestowed on the rest, perhaps, he then received the full endowments of an apostle, and was thenceforth qualified for the occasion when he was called on to act as one, in conjunction with St. Paul. That his qualifications as a witness had been already ascertained, was suggested as probable in the remarks on Matthias's election. In the present instance, the application of that singular title to him, "the son of consolation"—the record too of certain little circumstances in his history, such as that he was a Levite—of a Cyprian family—all seem to denote, that something had at this time

<sup>d</sup> Acts iv. 31.

<sup>e</sup> Acts iv. 36.

occurred, and was alluded to respecting him, which was important in the history of the Church—something which distinguished him from the number of those, who no less than he, sold their possessions, and laid the money at the apostles' feet. The interpretation subjoined to the word Barnabas explains this, and serves perhaps to point out, what is not elsewhere alluded to, the time and occasion of his inspiration and appointment as an apostle.

*The case of Ananias and Sapphira<sup>f</sup>.*

Among those who, like Barnabas, converted their possessions into money, and placed the amount at the disposal of the apostles, appeared Ananias and his wife Sapphira. They, however, are said to "have kept back part of the price," and thereby to have "lied to the Holy Ghost." For which crime the Spirit of God, as if to vindicate his authority as ruler in the new dispensation, smote them publicly and separately with death.

As their case involves two interesting questions, in the solution of which all are not agreed, it may be as well to pause, and to consider the incident with reference to both of these inquiries. The one is, the community of goods among the primitive Christians, the other, the sin against the Holy Ghost. As the two subjects are by this event

<sup>f</sup> Acts v.

accidentally thrown together, so by their concurrence they seem to illustrate and explain each other.

Many commentators and ecclesiastical writers have represented this community of goods, as implying a literal resignation of all private and individual property,—each surrendering his all to the public, and all receiving from the common stock what was requisite for their support. What end would have been gained by this, it is not easy to understand; and to meet the question concerning its inutility, and also its impracticability, it has been conjectured, that the custom was from certain peculiar circumstances rendered necessary in the Church of Jerusalem, but did not extend to other Churches. But that such was not the custom, even of the Church at Jerusalem, may be proved from this very instance. For Peter expressly reminds Ananias, that he had no temptation to commit this crime of falsehood, inasmuch as he was not called on, merely as a member of the Christian society, to sell his property, or, if sold, to bestow any of it on the Church. “While it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power?” The XXXVIIIth Article of the Church of England, in opposition to the mischievous tenets of the early anabaptists, merely disavows the obligation of Christians as such, to surrender their property to the Church, without adopting (as was indeed uncalled for) any explanation of the primi-

tive custom. The difficulty, however, under which the ordinary view of it laboured, has not escaped notice. Mosheim accordingly attempts to prove, that St. Luke's account implies a community of *use*, and not of *possession*,—that the supply of what was needed by the society and by individuals, was *acknowledged* by all as a bounden duty, and unanimously complied with<sup>g</sup>. But here, again, the case of Ananias, of Barnabas, and of others similarly, circumstanced proves, that from whatever motive they contributed, they resigned not a part, but *all* of their property. Else, wherein the offence of Ananias? The following suggestion then may perhaps be more satisfactory.

Nothing is more certain than that the ministers of the word, including the apostles, were maintained out of this public purse. If some, like St. Paul, relieved it by daily labour, his own words prove that they were not required to do so. And why were they thus maintained? Because, no doubt, *they* had in strict conformity with our Lord's words forsaken lands, houses, and all their goods for his sake, for his service. “Sell all that thou hast, and follow me<sup>h</sup>,” may perhaps aptly describe the first qualification of one who was to have, for the most part, no certain abode, and whose time and attention were necessarily to be withdrawn from the

<sup>g</sup> Dissertationes ad Hist. Eccles. pert. vol. ii. p. 14.

<sup>h</sup> Matt. xix. 21. Mark x. 21. Luke xviii. 22.



pursuits of gain, and even from the ordinary cares for the morrow. From the character, then, in which the original preachers of Christianity present themselves to our notice, from the promise of our Lord to those “who should forsake lands, houses, &c. for his sake and the Gospel<sup>i</sup>,” and from the fact, that they all did receive support from the public fund—from these circumstances taken together, does it not seem likely, that a resignation of all individual and separate property into the apostles’ hands, was the first step taken by those who devoted themselves to the ministry?—the pledge, that they having now forsaken all, were ready to follow the standard of the Cross? On this pledge, perhaps then, they were put into office by the apostles, their other qualifications having been at the same time ascertained by the power of discerning spirits<sup>k</sup>.

<sup>i</sup> Luke xviii. 29, 30.

<sup>k</sup> There is a passage in Eusebius’s history, (lib. iii. c. 137.) which certainly seems to confirm this suggestion. Adverting to the fact, that in the first days of Christianity, a great portion of the converts became themselves preachers and ministers of the word, he expressly mentions, as a preparatory step, the resignation of their property for the relief of the poor, τὴν σωτήριον ΠΡΟΤΕΡΟΝ ἀπεπλήρουσαν παρακλίουσιν, ἐνθάδε ἵκοντες τὰς οὐσίας. ΕΠΕΙΤΑ ΔΕ ἀποδημίας στιλλομένοι ἔργον ἐπιτελοῦν εὐαγγελιστῶν. Again in discussing the question, whether the Therapeutæ were Christians, (lib. ii. c. 17.) he argues in favour of their being so, from the existence of such a custom amongst them, and appealing to this very passage of the Acts, asserts that it was practised in one period of the Church. That the custom should require this kind of notice by the historian, at the close of the third

One remark there is, certainly, in St. Luke's account, which may be considered by some to stand in the way of this suggestion. He states, that on the second manifestation of the Holy Ghost, "*all* who had lands and houses sold them, and brought in the amount." But, when we remember the prophetic exclamation of the Psalmist, "The Lord spake, and great was the company of the preachers<sup>1</sup>," and consider how many were required now for the dispersion of the faith, this in a *society of poor men* cannot imply a very disproportionate number. Add to this, that the statement of their bringing in their money to the apostles, by no means implies that it was in all instances accepted. In the general excitement, produced by two rapidly successive manifestations of the Holy Ghost and of its gifts, all may have rushed eagerly to claim employment in a service so evidently divine, and so gloriously sanctioned by God. All who had property would naturally have thrown it up, as a pledge that they were ready to be employed, leaving the apostles and the Holy Spirit who guided them to decide whether the offer of themselves would be accepted.

So considering the matter, the crime of Ananias and Sapphira assumes a very peculiar character.

century, proves however, that it was soon abandoned. The temptation to employ spiritual talents for worldly advantage, might have created an expediency and need for the rule, which would only last during the inspired age.

<sup>1</sup> Psalm lxxviii. 11.

They sought to obtain the office of ministry, and the spiritual gifts and privileges attached to it, under a false pretence. The pledge which they gave, in offering, as their all, only a portion of their property, to the apostles,—the agents of God the Holy Ghost,—was a bold test, applied to the omniscience of God in his present government of the Church, a practical lie unto the God of truth. Theirs was not a *negative* but a *positive* offence against the Holy Spirit; not, like other sins, an act of *disobedience*, but one of *aggression*; and as such perhaps falling under that denomination, of which Christ had said, that they should not be forgiven, “neither *in this world*, neither in the world to come<sup>m</sup>.” Their awful sentence might have been twofold in its effects, the one temporal, the other eternal; the one for the crime of treason, in attempting to corrupt the pure constitution of the Church, the other for the sin of blasphemy against the omniscient God.

That besides this consecration of the whole of the ministers’ property to the service of the Church, frequent and large contributions were made by others cannot be doubted. Mosheim’s interpretation, therefore, as applicable to the great body of Christians, is undoubtedly true, that with them it was a community of *use*, not of *possession*. Besides the ministers, the poor were supplied from this

<sup>m</sup> Matt. xii. 31, 32. Mark iii. 28, 29. Luke xii. 10.

fund; and especial mention is made of "the widows," if indeed these were not rather an order of ministers than part of the poor. More properly, perhaps, they belonged to both classes. As deaconesses were early required in the Church, it seems most natural, that those females who, from their poverty and widowhood, were deriving support from the Church, should be employed in this capacity, according to the apostle's precept, "if any work not neither should he eat<sup>n</sup>." The name of deaconesses might not have been given them for some time after they exercised the duties belonging to that order, for they are called widows before the term deacon even appears in the Acts. Wherein their service consisted, may be sufficiently understood from the office of deacons, which will be next considered. It may be enough to observe, that their order was requisite in the first promulgation of Christianity; because the frequent intercourse between male catechists and the young female catechumens might have brought a scandal on the Church. In the East, where the strict separation between male and female society was then as now proverbial, this measure was quite indispensable.

<sup>n</sup> 2 Thess. iii. 10.

*Appointment of the seven deacons<sup>o</sup>.*

The terrible display of the Holy Spirit's power, in the death of Ananias and Sapphira, was succeeded by many illustrious miracles, performed through the apostle Peter. In frequency, and perhaps in their extraordinary character, they equalled our Lord's; agreeably to his promise, "He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also, and greater works than these shall he do<sup>p</sup>." On the line of difference between them, some remarks have been already made and a reason suggested, why, during this first period of the Holy Spirit's dispensation, this apostle's ministry was so prominent. This latter point, as one of some importance, will be again adverted to.

The effect of all this was what might be expected. The number of converts daily increased, and the spirit of persecution was exasperated. The apostles were again imprisoned, scourged, and threatened with heavier vengeance. But God released them by his angels; and, in proportion to their need, his spirit emboldened and guided them, and "his strength was made perfect in weakness." But the storm was now only gathering.

Meanwhile within the Church itself were displayed some slight symptoms of discontent, which

<sup>o</sup> Acts vi. 3.<sup>p</sup> John xiv. 12.



deserve to be noticed particularly, on account of the measure to which they gave rise. The complaint is called "a murmuring of the Grecians (or foreign Jews) against the Hebrews, (or native Jews,) because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration." Who these widows probably were has already been suggested; and if the suggestion, that they were deaconesses, be admitted, the grounds of the complaint may be readily surmised. As the greater share of duty would at this time devolve on the Hebrew widows or deaconesses, they might have been paid more liberally, as their services seemed to require, and hence the discontent.

This, it is true, supposes that the order of deacons and deaconesses already existed, and may seem at first to contradict the statement of St. Luke, that in consequence of this murmuring deacons were appointed. It does not however really contradict it; for evidently some *dispensers* there must have been, and if so, either the apostles must have officiated as deacons, or special deacons there must have been, by whatever name they went. That the apostles did not officiate, is plain from the tenour of the narrative, which indicates that the appeal was made to them, and that they excused themselves from presiding personally at the "ministration," (as was probably desired by the discontented party,) alleging that it was incompatible with their proper duties. "It is not reason that we should *leave the word of God*, and serve tables."

This very assertion, then, is proof certain that they did not officiate. Again, on reading over the names of the seven deacons, we find them all of the Grecian or Hellenistic party. Stephen, Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas, the last of whom is expressly described as a proselyte of Antioch<sup>1</sup>. Now this surely would have produced a murmuring of the Hebrews against the Grecians, unless they had already some in office interested in looking after their rights. With these presumptions in favour of a previous appointment of deacons, it would seem then, that these seven were added to the former number because of the complaint.

All that is thus far intimated of their office is, that they were employed in the daily distribution of the alms and the stipends due from the public fund. Whether, even at the first, their duties were limited to this department of *service*<sup>r</sup>, may be reasonably doubted. Of this portion of their duties we are now informed, obviously, because to the unsatisfactory mode in which this had been hitherto performed it was owing, that the new appointment took place, and that the subject was noticed at all. It is, however, by no means improbable, that the young men who carried out the dead bodies of Ananias and Sapphira, and who are described as “ready” in attendance, were of the same order; in other words, deacons by office, if not by name.

<sup>1</sup> Acts vi. 5.

<sup>r</sup> Διακόνια.

What may serve to confirm this view of it is, the opposition between what would seem to have been their original title, and another order in the Church, They are called “ juniors ” and “ young men,” (*νεώτεροι* and *νεανίσκοι*;) terms so strongly opposed to presbyters or elders, as to incline one at the first glance to consider them as expressive of the two orders of the ministry, the seniors and the juniors, the *πρεσβυτέρους* *διάκονους* and the *νεώτερους* *διάκονους*; the two orders, in short, which at length received the fixed and perpetual titles of presbyters and deacons\*.

Accordingly, there is no just ground for supposing, that when the same term deacon occurs in the Epistles of St. Paul, a different order of men is intended<sup>t</sup>; first, because an office may preserve its original name long after the duties originally attached to it have been changed; and, secondly, because whatever duties may have been added

\* It may be objected, indeed, that although the terms might have been different at different periods, yet the writer would have adopted *one only*, because that one would now have been expressive of the class as it existed at all times. But the case is not necessarily so. There might have been some distinction coincident with the change of names, which occasioned him to adopt the one to a certain period of his history, and the other subsequently. So he has applied the name of Saul to the great Gentile apostle in the early part of the Acts, and afterwards as invariably that of Paul, although no one can doubt the identity of the person.

<sup>t</sup> 1 Tim. iii. 8, 12, 13.

to the office of deacons, it is certain that the duty of attending to the poor was for several centuries attached to it. Even after the deacons ceased to hold the office of treasurers, and the Bishops began to receive the revenues of their respective sees, the distribution of that portion which was allotted to charity still passed through the hands of the deacons. Hence in a still later period, the title of cardinal deacon ; and hence, too, the appropriation of the the term *diaconia* to those Churches wherein alms used to be collected and distributed to the poor<sup>u</sup>.

Not that it is possible to point out, with any thing like precision, the course of duty which belonged to the primitive deacons. That it corresponded entirely with that of our present order of deacons is very unlikely, whatever analogy be allowed from their relative situation in the Church. As the Church during the greater part of the first century was a shifting and progressive institution, their duties probably underwent continual change and modification. If we were to be guided, for instance, by the office in which we find the “young men” (*νεανίσκοι*) engaged when the dead bodies of Ananias and Sapphira were removed, we should say

<sup>u</sup> Lud. Anton. Muratori *Antiquitates Italicae medii ævi*, tom. iii. p. 571. Also Du Cange, in *Glossar. Latin. medii ævi. ad v. Diaconia, Diaconites, Diaconus*. Moshemii Comm. De Reb. Christ. ante Const. p. 121.

that they performed the business, which, in the present day, would devolve on the inferior attendants of our churches. If, again, we were to judge of their character from the occasion on which we find them acting as stewards of the Church fund, a higher station would be doubtless assigned to them, but still, one not more nearly connected with the ministry of the word, nor approaching more to the sphere of duty which belongs to our deacons. On the other hand, the instances of Stephen and Philip prove, that the title was applied to those who were engaged in the higher departments of the ministry, although not in the highest\*.

After all, it is most likely that the word deacon was originally applied, as its etymology suggests, to all the *ministers* of the Gospel establishment<sup>v</sup>. But the apostles having from the first a specific title, it more properly denoted any minister inferior to them,—any, however employed in the *service* of the Church. Between these, also, there soon obtained a distinction. If we suppose, then, that the *seniors*, or superior class, were distinguished by the obvious title of elder deacons, (πρεσβύτεροι διάκονοι,)

\* Acts vi. 8. viii. 5.

<sup>v</sup> Thus the apostles on this very occasion are represented as speaking of their own office under the title of a deaconship, ἡμῖς δὲ τῇ προσευχῇ καὶ τῇ ΔΙΑΚΟΝΙΑΙ τοῦ λόγου προσκαρτεροῦμεν. So also St. Paul writes to the Corinthians, 1 Ep. xii. 4, 5. Διαιρέσεις δὲ χαρισμάτων εἰσὶ, τὸ δὲ αὐτὸ πνεῦμα καὶ διαιρέσεις ΔΙΑΚΟΝΙΩΝ, εἰσὶ, καὶ ὁ αὐτὸς Κύριος.



the generic and unappropriated term “deacon” would devolve on the remaining class. And thus the present order in the Church, to which that name is applied, may be truly asserted to be deacons in the apostolical and primitive sense of the word; and yet, nevertheless, much may be said about deacons, both in the New Testament and in the writings of the early fathers, which will not apply to them.

The mode in which the present appointment was made must not pass unnoticed. The apostles are said to have called to them “the multitude of the disciples<sup>z</sup>,” to have specified the qualifications for the office; and to have ordained them, when elected and presented for that purpose, by prayer and the laying on of hands. The assembly is described as vested with the power of election, the apostles with the office of ordaining.

But of whom, it may be asked, was this general assembly composed? Was it made up of all the disciples who chose to attend and vote; or of certain, whose privilege or duty it was to represent the whole body? The literal import of the Greek favours the former supposition; the circumstances of the case itself, the latter; and this so greatly as to render it by far the most probable. In the first place, that there should be either a place found, or permission granted, in Jerusalem, for eight or ten thousand suspected persons to assem-

<sup>z</sup> Acts vi. 2.

ble, and unmolested to discuss the very questions which rendered them obnoxious, is very improbable. Equally improbable is it, that so mixed a multitude should be able, under any circumstances, to transact business such as this; except, indeed, by means of some miraculous interference, of which there is no intimation. Some other meaning then must be sought for in this expression, “the multitude of the disciples;” and why should it not mean the *full* assembly of the *disciples appointed for forming such assemblies*? Such a phrase would not be more harsh and unnatural than when we speak of “the *Commons* of Great Britain in Parliament assembled,” applying, in the latter as in the former case, to the representative body, the term which properly belongs to the body represented<sup>a</sup>.

<sup>a</sup> St. Luke, in describing the assembly in which Matthias was elected, employs, apparently as an equivalent phrase, ὁ ὄχλος τῶν μαθητῶν. As this is not the only coincidence of expression in the two passages, and as the forms and proceedings described likewise very strikingly correspond, it may throw some light on both to place these points of coincidence in a scheme side by side. The difference between these will be found to arise out of the circumstance before noticed, viz. the absence of inspired wisdom from the one, and its presence in the other.

#### I. Election of Matthias. II.

##### Election of Matthias.

##### Election of the Seven Deacons.

1. Ἀναστὰς Πέτρος ἐν μέσῳ τῶν μαθητῶν.

1. Προσκλησισάμενοι δὲ οἱ δάδεκα τὸ πλῆθος τῶν μαθητῶν.

2. Εἶπεν—ἄνδρες ἀδελφοί.

2. Εἶπον—ἀδελφοί.

3. Δεῖ τῶν συνελθόντων ἡμῖν

3. Ἐπισκέψασθε οὖν ἄνδρας ἐξ

In the narrative of their proceedings then, what more natural than that these should be called “the disciples,” in opposition to the apostles, who were likewise present. The term multitude (πλήθος) may then be understood, either as indicating that the

ἀνδρῶν κ. τ. λ. μάρτυρα τῆς ἀνα-  
στάσεως αὐτοῦ, γίνεσθαι σὺν ἡμῖν  
ἕνα τούτων.

4. Καὶ ἕστησαν δύο.

5. Προσυζάμενοι.

6. Ἐδωκαν κλήρους αὐτῶν κ. τ.  
λ. καὶ συγκατεψηφίσθη μετὰ τῶν  
ἑνδεκά.

ὑμῶν μαρτυρουμένους ἐπὶ τὰ, πλήρεις,  
κ. τ. λ. εὖς καταστήσομαι ἐπὶ τῆς  
χρείας ταύτης.

4. Καὶ ἐξελέξαντο—εὖς ἕστησαν  
ἰνάπιοι τῶν ἀποστόλων.

5. Προσυζάμενοι.

6. Ἐπίθηκαν αὐτοῖς τὰς χεῖρας.

In the proceedings of the two assemblies the only material difference is in the last point. In Matthias's case no laying on of hands is mentioned, because the Holy Ghost not having then been given, (or we should perhaps rather say, the gift of conferring the Holy Ghost,) this sign, whereby it was afterwards communicated, would have been a mere empty form. What in other ordinations was effected by the laying on of the apostles' hands, in Matthias's was effected by the descent of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost; with a view to which it is likely that his election was made to take place before that event. Again, in the election of deacons only a single office was conferred, and that they held from God the Holy Ghost, or his agents, who as such laid their hands on them. But in the election of Matthias, his first appointment preceded the dispensation of the Spirit. Like the other apostles, he was ordained a witness by the Lord himself, and his ordination by the Spirit was a subsequent procedure. Thus, St. Paul appears first to have received his revelation and apostleship, his appointment as witness from the Lord Jesus Christ at Jerusalem, and then, after a considerable interval, the imposition of hands, as a servant of the Church and a minister of the Spirit.

meeting was a *full* one, or, what is certainly more in accordance with the general analogy of the original language, it may be used for "the great body of the disciples," by the same obvious figure of speech which we employ when we call the representatives of the commonalty of England "the Commons."

*Effects of Stephen's Martyrdom<sup>b</sup>.*

It was, obviously, an important feature in the divine scheme, that the sceptre should depart from Judah soon after the coming of the Messiah. Had the Jews continued to possess the right of inflicting capital punishment, an effectual check must immediately have been given to the progress of the Gospel. Even as it was, the disciples had to dread every thing which calumny, intrigue, and tumultuary violence, could effect. Imprisonment, stripes, and menaces, had proved of no avail. The populace thirsted for blood, and Stephen was the first victim.

His death was preparatory to the preaching of the Gospel beyond Jerusalem and Judæa. In exact conformity with the words of the Son of God to his apostles, "Ye shall be witnesses unto me, both in Jerusalem, and in all Judæa, and in Samaria, and to the uttermost part of the earth<sup>c</sup>," his

<sup>b</sup> Acts vii.<sup>c</sup> Acts i. 8.

Holy Spirit directed the course of that light which he was dispensing. To escape further acts of outrage, all the disciples once more forsook Jerusalem and fled. But the dispersion was not as on the day of the crucifixion. They were no longer comfortless, no longer dispirited, no longer at a loss what to do, or what to expect. As in the former dispersion, the apostles, and it may be some few besides, remained in Jerusalem, whilst the Holy Spirit guided the flight of the others through "all Judæa and Samaria<sup>d</sup>." Philip,—he whose name appears second in the list of the seven deacons,—no less than Stephen, justified the wisdom of his appointment. Samaria being already prepared for the Gospel, gladly heard the word from him. Here the far-famed Simon, who was endeavouring, as it would seem, to impose on his countrymen under the pretended character of the Messiah, if not converted, was defeated in his scheme of imposture<sup>e</sup>. Philip, however, could only preach and baptize. The privilege of receiving some extraordinary gift of the Spirit, as a pledge to the young and inexperienced Church, that that unseen Spirit had indeed taken up its abode with them and within them, could only be conferred by an apostle. Philip's baptism, no doubt, conveyed all the beneficial effects of Christian baptism; and the Holy Ghost was as really and fully communicated thereby, as if it had been performed

<sup>d</sup> Acts viii. 1.<sup>e</sup> Acts viii. 9.



by an apostle. The descent and operation of the Holy Ghost was then, as now, unseen, unfelt,—the object of faith only. But while this doctrine was yet strange and new, some assurance of it was requisite, in order to induce each believer to be satisfied that the Comforter was present *to him*,—that these effects, though impalpable, were real. For the purpose of granting this sign of assurance then to the Samaritan converts, Peter and John were sent to them from Jerusalem. The form, as has been already noticed, consisted in the laying on of hands, and in prayer, and must have corresponded to our present ceremony of Confirmation, which, doubtless, arose out of it. As the apostles were gradually removed from the earth, those on whom their *perpetual* ministry devolved, might have continued this *temporary* custom, from a view of its expediency for other purposes beyond its original and specific one; and thus *Confirmation* may have rightly and reasonably retained a place among the ceremonies of the Church for ever, although the *sign of Confirmation*, to which it owes its name, has been long withdrawn.

The fact, that the apostles only could impart the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Spirit, may serve to guide us in an inquiry, which has never perhaps been satisfactorily concluded, as to the precise time when those gifts ceased. For, if the above assertion be true, they must of course have ceased with the generation which was contemporary

with the last of the apostles. If St. John then continued to the close of his life to exercise his apostolical power of imparting the Holy Ghost, his life being prolonged to the end of the first century, *some* workers of miracles may have been found as late as the middle of the second century, but we cannot account (on scriptural grounds) for the existence of any beyond that period.

That the Holy Ghost may after this have interposed, and empowered its agents to perform miracles, cannot certainly be denied, any more than we can now pretend to affirm, that the same power will never again be granted. It would seem too, from the writings of Justin Martyr, Tertullian, and Cyprian, that they were familiar with the exercise of such a power in the Church. Gregory, Bishop of Neocæsaræa, who lived as late as the third century, received the title of *Thaumaturgus* from his miracles or pretended miracles. And, if we may credit Theodoret and Sozomen, there were instances of well-attested miracles later than his. The earliest positive testimony to their cessation, perhaps, is to be found in the writings of Chrysostom. In his Sermons, for instance, on the Resurrection, and in that on the Pentecost; in both of which he attempts to remove any scruples which the fact might have occasioned, by suggesting the reason why miraculous power should have been withdrawn from the Church<sup>f</sup>.

<sup>f</sup> Chrysost. Opera, (ed. Frontonis Ducaeï Rani 1621.) vol. v. pp. 521, 553.

This is a species of evidence which outweighs any more direct assertion to the contrary. When we read accordingly in Augustin, and other writers, that at the very period when Chrysostom was thus writing and preaching, miracles were commonly wrought at the tombs of the saints, such testimony only tends to make us look back with suspicion and distrust on the accounts given of those of an earlier date, and to attribute a similar inaccuracy and rash credulity to Ruffinus, Theodoret, Sozomen, and others, which is proved against Augustin and many of his contemporaries.

Indeed, even during the latter part of the apostolical era, instances cannot be supposed to have been common, when we consider the true character and probable intent for which such a power was lodged for a time with the Church, and put to ourselves the questions, Why was such extraordinary assistance granted for a season, and then withdrawn, not at once, but gradually? Why were the apostles themselves, who certainly possessed the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit in a degree beyond that which they could impart to others, restrained in the exercise of them, so as to employ them, not at their own discretion, but as the Spirit moved them?

Philip's labours in Samaria having been superseded by the arrival of the two apostles, he was sent by the Holy Spirit to meet an Ethiopian eunuch in his return from Jerusalem to his home, and to baptize him<sup>f</sup>. Who this person was, and whether he was

<sup>f</sup> Acts viii. 26.

afterwards employed amongst his own people by the blessed Spirit, and for that purpose converted and baptized thus early by an especial mission, are points left untouched. It may be observed, however, that he was by religion a Jew, a proselyte of righteousness, and not merely a proselyte of the gate; for to this latter description of persons the Church was not yet thrown open. That he was so, appears both from his being found by Philip busied with a passage in the Jewish Scriptures<sup>g</sup>, and also from the very remarkable circumstances which afterwards attended the conversion and baptism of Cornelius<sup>h</sup>.

### *Conversion of Saul<sup>i</sup>.*

The holy Comforter rendered the murder of Stephen subservient in another way to the furtherance of his great work. He who out of the stones of Jerusalem could have raised up children unto Abraham, chose to form the noblest champion of his cause on earth out of its earliest and bitterest persecutor<sup>k</sup>. The most conspicuous in the scene

<sup>g</sup> Acts viii. 28.

<sup>h</sup> Acts x.

<sup>i</sup> Acts ix.

<sup>k</sup> He states, in his Epistle to the Galatians, that "God separated him from his mother's womb, and called him by his grace;" on which, and other the like expressions, has been founded the doctrine that the salvation of every individual is a

of lawless violence to which we have been alluding, was Saul of Tarsus. Beyond all the rest he had distinguished himself in searching out, and finding grounds for imprisonment against, those Christians who still lurked in Jerusalem. Having exhausted his misguided zeal there, he departed for Damascus with a sort of inquisitorial commission from the high priest. It was on his journey thither<sup>1</sup>, that his miraculous conversion took place<sup>m</sup>. Although the details of that signal event must be familiar to all, and although the subject has been often thoroughly and ably discussed, still the following notices may to many be not unacceptable.

The point which is perhaps the most likely to be overlooked is, that this first revelation was totally distinct in its object from that which Saul afterwards received at Jerusalem<sup>n</sup>. All intended by the first was, to convert him to Christianity; by the second he was appointed an apostle. That he immediately began to propagate the faith which he once destroyed, is no proof to the contrary. For this was

matter of arbitrary election. But *to what* was St. Paul "separated" and "called?" Clearly not to eternal life, but to a particular station of duty, which he filled with the most anxious sense of extraordinary responsibility, lest, as he tells us, "when he had preached to others, he should himself be a cast away." (1 Cor. ix. 27.)

<sup>1</sup> Acts ix. 3.

<sup>m</sup> A. D. 35.

<sup>n</sup> A. D. 44. or according to some 38. See the reasons for assigning the former date in note, page 729.



the privilege, if not the duty, of all Christians; as it had been before supposed to be of all Jews. Besides, although not yet appointed a witness, he was at his baptism "filled with the Holy Ghost," and thereby ordained a minister of the Spirit. Certain it is, that although, after his conversion, he began forthwith to preach, and preached first at Damascus, then, perhaps, in Arabia<sup>o</sup>, and then again at Damascus, even so as to endanger his life; yet on his going ultimately to Jerusalem, he needed the introduction and assurance of Barnabas, to remove from the apostles their suspicion of him. Possessing as they did the gift of discerning spirits, this could hardly have happened if St. Paul were then an apostle.

This will be more apparent from a slight consideration of the narrative of his conversion. He was struck blind by the glorious light which shone round about him, and he heard and answered a divine voice, but it does not appear that he then *saw the Lord*. The contrary indeed is implied. Now his appointment to the apostleship is described by him, as taking place in a visible interview with the Lord,—with God manifest in the flesh, in the

<sup>o</sup> Although from the narrative of the Acts taken alone, it would appear that he went immediately from Damascus to Jerusalem, yet by comparing the passage with his own account in the Galatians, it is certain that he went first into Arabia, returned to Damascus, then, after an interval of three years, proceeded to Jerusalem. See Acts ix. compared with Galatians i.

person of Jesus Christ. Again, Ananias was sent to him, for what purpose? Not, surely, to appoint him an apostle: Ananias was not himself an apostle, and could not therefore, as we suppose, confer *any extraordinary* gifts of the Spirit, much less the greatest of those gifts. He was sent to restore his sight, and to baptize him. This is, clearly, all that Ananias was commissioned to do, and all he is represented as doing. He laid his hands on Saul, and Saul recovered his sight. He baptized him, and the Holy Ghost descended on him.

That the descent was marked by the peculiar symbol of the Comforter, and consequently conferred on him gifts of the highest order, has been before pointed out, as an inference fairly to be drawn from the sacred records of his ministry. Ananias's declaration alone may be taken as strong presumption of the fact. "The Lord hath sent me that thou mayest receive thy sight," and "*be filled with the Holy Ghost.*" It is in itself, we say, a strong presumption of the fact, because (independently of the consideration that he did possess extraordinary gifts) the latter expression does not ever seem to have been extended to a communication of the Spirit by the imposition of hands. St. Luke, to whose writings it is peculiar, uses it from the first only on those occasions when the *immediate agency* of God is his subject, *e. g.* the appointment of John the Baptist, and the baptism and manifestation of Christ. Observing this same phrase in his account also of

the descent of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost, his sparing use of it subsequently, and the very remarkable occasions on which it does occur, the conclusion is inevitable.

## CHAP. III.

### PREACHING TO JEWS AND DEVOUT GENTILES.

From A. D. 41—45.

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#### *Conversion of Cornelius<sup>a</sup>.*

**HITHERTO** the messengers of Christ and of the Holy Spirit had been sent only to the Jews, to “the lost sheep of the house of Israel<sup>b</sup>,” or to those to whom they had communicated their privileges and hopes. Hitherto all who had been baptized were, either by birth or proselytism, members of that society which God had set apart as “his own,” had elected, sanctified, taught, and governed. Meanwhile the divine Dispenser was preparing, by a bold and unexpected innovation, to extend his sphere of operation. Among the unsanctified and unclean, of those who belonged not to the Mosaic covenant, and held no interest in its promises, a portion was now to be invited on equal terms into the kingdom of the Messiah.

Saul had been converted, and was engaged in a course of duty which might train him for still

<sup>a</sup> Acts x.      <sup>b</sup> Matt. x. 6. xv. 24.

hardier efforts in his peculiar and more important commission. By his removal from the persecuting faction at Jerusalem too, “ the Churches throughout all Judæa and Galilee and Samaria<sup>c</sup>” were left unmolested. All was ripe, then, for the counsel of God to take effect.

In one sense this change was not unexpected. It had been too often and too plainly intimated by our Lord, for his apostles, at least, to have misunderstood him. In those remarkable parables especially, of the great supper, and of the labourers in the vineyard<sup>d</sup>, the very circumstance of the *gradual* admission of the Gentiles is unfolded. Nevertheless, they were far from comprehending the exact import of these hints and declarations, and seem in this instance, as on the subject of Christ’s death, to have received them in humble faith, expecting still that some unforeseen method would be devised, to reconcile the truth of their Master’s assertions with their own preconceived views. Few points in the general character of the apostles is more worthy of attention than this uncertainty, this vague surmise, with which they received so many important objects of faith. It is thoroughly *in keeping*, not as a feature of Judaism merely, but of human nature ; and explains to us why our Lord so often repeated his admonition to them *to believe*. Belief under such circumstances formed their chief trial during

<sup>c</sup> Acts ix. 31.

<sup>d</sup> Luke xiv. 16. Matt. xx. 1.



his abode on earth. It was the trial under which Judas sank, Peter wavered, and all forsook him and fled. Ill fares it with the Christian, when he attempts to force the doctrine of his Master into an unnatural accordance with prejudices however sanctified.

So it was then, that nothing less than an express and particular revelation, corroborated by a train of circumstances equally extraordinary, was found requisite to induce the apostle chosen for this new ministry to engage in an enterprise so strange and revolting to the whole Church. Doubtless, he (and so also the Jews) conceived that God regarded with some difference of favour those "devout Gentiles" who, having forsaken idolatry, worshipped him in spirit and in truth; but that this favour should be so far extended, as to make them fellow-heirs with the Israelites of the promises of the Messiah's reign, promises which they had ever considered as peculiar and unalienable, this was as yet quite incomprehensible.

Up to this period in the history of the infant Church, we may observe that Peter occupies the chief, almost the whole attention of the sacred historian. Whatever of an extraordinary nature is to be done, whatever implies a more immediate intercourse with the Holy Spirit, is committed to Peter, either alone, or as the principal agent. It is he who first rouses the drooping brethren to exertion. It is he whose inspired preaching on the

day of Pentecost works conviction in three thousand souls. It is he who passes the sentence of the Holy Ghost on Ananias and Sapphira: it is he whose prayer is made effectual for the lame, the palsied, and the dead—whose shadow is deemed holy, and whose very garments convey virtue in their touch. It is Peter who is prominent, and first in every gift and endowment of the Spirit, and in none more than in that “boldness” or “freedom of speech” (παρρησία) before the people of the Sanhedrim, which was an especial and high characteristic of an apostle<sup>e</sup>.

One cannot help perceiving in all this, and in the attention which the sacred writer has directed to it, that some object must have been intended by the Holy Spirit in thus selecting *for a time* one apostle for repeated communications, instructions, and powers, and also in leaving a record of this preference, whilst the contemporary labours of the others are scarcely noticed. Peter was evidently going through a course of discipline and preparation for his peculiar and trying office. It was—or we should rather say it might have been—necessary thus to accustom him to the frequent instructions of the Spirit, in order that he might be so familiar with the heavenly vision, as to entertain no momentary doubt as to its reality, however much the import of its message should astonish and confound him. “Rise and go with them, *nothing doubting*,

<sup>e</sup> See Acts i. 15. ii. 14. v. 15, 16, 29. ix. 34, 36. iv. 13.

because *I* have sent thee," *I* the voice with which thou art familiar. For the better assurance of the Church, that the apostle had not been deluded, it might have been requisite that they should be accustomed to regard him as the chief agent of the Spirit, and the great worker of miracles. With their strong disposition to revolt against the unexpected turn which the new dispensation was taking, it might have been necessary that he who was the agent in so unpopular a work, should, by this course of eminent ministry, and especially by acting as the mainspring in the regulation of such affairs, as were left to their uninspired decision, acquire an authority and weight of official character, which might of itself repress or soften down the spirit of murmuring. That all this might have been requisite, the event proves. For although it was Peter who converted the first Gentile convert; although he pleaded in his defence an express revelation; although that revelation had received a counterpart in a vision to the devout Gentile, who was to be the first-fruits of his order; although the Holy Spirit had, as it were, reproved his backwardness, by descending before baptism on the destined converts: still, on this subject, there long lurked in the bosoms of the elder members of the Church a stubborn and implacable feeling. This ill suppressed jealousy at length shewed itself in the disputes at Syrian Antioch, concerning the conformity of these converts to the Jewish law, and subsequently so far prevailed over

the firmness of their own apostle, as to subject him to the well known rebuke of St. Paul<sup>f</sup>.

Some few circumstances attending this opening of the Gospel commission to the devout Gentiles will be now considered. At the same time, in confirmation of the remarks which have just been made on the preparatory discipline of Peter for this work, it may be observed, that with the conversion of Cornelius, all that exclusive or peculiar regard to him in the narrative of the Acts ceases<sup>g</sup>. Henceforward he is not represented as forming a more prominent feature in the scene than others. The object of his having been made to do so was accomplished, and with the same view the remainder, and by far the greater portion, of the Acts is occupied with St. Paul. In *his* ministry was henceforth developed the mystery of godliness, to trace the progressive stages of which is the main object of St. Luke's history. Merely judging from the result of their collective ministry, we know that the other apostles and ministers of the Spirit must have been actively engaged, each in his own course of duty; but St. Paul's line was the main road in the course of Christianity, into which St. Peter's gradually

<sup>f</sup> Gal. ii. 11.

<sup>g</sup> His imprisonment is indeed subsequently recorded in full detail, but only, it would seem, in order the more fully to illustrate the effect of his new commission on all parties. Herod imprisoned him, and designed to take away his life, because he saw that it was *pleasing to the Jews*. (Acts xii. 3.)

widened, and to which therefore the brief historian of the Holy Spirit's progressive dispensation naturally and judiciously confined the residue of his narrative.

I have remarked that St. Peter, at the time he was sent to the devout Gentiles, had no more intimation than the great body of the Church, that the Gospel was ever to be preached to the idolatrous Gentiles also. It may be observed, that Cornelius is particularly described as a devout Gentile, "who feared God with all his house." The representation under which he was announced to Peter, is that of "a righteous man, and one who feared God, and could appeal for his character to the whole nation of the Jews," (*μαρτυρούμενος ὑπὸ ὅλου τοῦ ἔθνους τῶν Ἰουδαίων.*) Peter, knowing all this, and having communicated personally with the good centurion, yet prefaces his address to those assembled in his house by saying, that he had hitherto considered such as he shut out from communion with God's people; but that God having declared<sup>h</sup> the contrary, by telling him to call no man common or unclean, he had come to them without scruple. This shews that he understood his revelation as

<sup>h</sup> *Ἐδιξ.* Is there not some probability that Cornelius, and the centurion, whose sick servant Jesus healed, were one and the same? Several points in the brief description of the latter coincide very closely with Cornelius's character and circumstances; e. g. that he was anxiously careful of his household, and was held in very high estimation by the Jews. Otherwise, too, it seems strange, that nothing further should have been noticed of one so promising, as to receive the Saviour's praise, "I have not found so great faith, no not in Israel." (Matt. viii. 10.)



intended only to remove the barrier between the Jew and the proselyte of the gate, or mere believer in Jehovah. That he certainly considered the extension as proceeding no further, may be made more clear from the words which he exultingly uttered on the descent of the Holy Ghost upon Cornelius and his household—words spoken in the rapture of the moment, and therefore the more likely to convey the liveliest impression which his mind had conceived of the liberality and unreservedness of the Spirit's dispensation. “Of a truth, I perceive that God is no respecter of persons; but in every nation *he that feareth him and worketh righteousness, is accepted by him.*” This unquestionably limits his view to those of the Gentiles who had already renounced idolatry—in short, the devout Gentiles. It explains, also, in what sense he had understood the divine communication made to him, that “what God *had cleansed*, it was not for him to call common;” namely, that in every nation he who already feared God, and worked righteousness, and he only, had been cleansed and accepted by God. With the same sentiment, the Church of Jerusalem received his statement of what had taken place, “glorifying God and saying, Then hath God also granted *even to the Gentiles* repentance unto life<sup>1</sup>.” In this sense, then, it will be necessary to consider the admission of the Gentiles to be spoken of, until the period when it shall

<sup>1</sup> Acts xi. 18.

appear that the Church became acquainted with the design of the Holy Spirit to offer baptism to the idolatrous Gentiles also.

Another remark was, that on this occasion, as on one of the greatest moment, the Holy Ghost manifested his descent by the same visible signs as on the day of Pentecost. To this conclusion we are led by remarking, first, in the narrative of the event, “that the Holy Ghost *fell on them*,” and was “*poured out on them* ;” expressions which could only properly apply to the above-mentioned extraordinary descent of the Holy Ghost. Again, as on the day of Pentecost, it was followed by an involuntary display of the gift of tongues, that gift which was especially denoted by the visible symbol of “tongues of fire.” By this, no doubt, God gave now the same proof to the Jewish Christians, that the devout Gentiles were called, as he had before given to the unbelieving Jews, in favour of their converted brethren. “And accordingly those believers of the circumcision who had come with Peter, were amazed at the gifts of the Holy Ghost having been poured out even on the Gentiles ; for they heard them “speaking in divers tongues, and magnifying God.” Lastly, St. Peter’s words are decisive of the fact, that the mode of the Spirit’s descent was the same as on the day of Pentecost, “The Holy Ghost,” said he, “fell on them as on us at the beginning, putting no difference between them and us <sup>k</sup>.”

<sup>k</sup> Acts xi. 15.

It was further observed, as a solitary instance on record, that the Holy Ghost descended on the candidates for baptism before the ceremony was performed. This strongly confirms the view already taken of the extraordinary manifestations of the Spirit. They were for *confirmation* of its *real* but *unseen* and *perpetual* descent, and residence in the heart of every member of the Church in every age. Baptism, the appointed ceremony to which this was for ever attached, was not superseded by the miraculous signs; but those signs only hailed as a sanction for baptism, inasmuch as they proved that even the Gentiles would receive the mysterious and insensible influence of the Spirit through that rite. The signs were the appropriate *miracles* of God manifested by the Spirit; as healing the sick, cleansing the lepers, walking on the sea, raising the dead, and the like, were the miraculous evidence of God manifested in the flesh. When the apostles healed the sick and raised the dead, they did it by virtue of their appointment by Christ as his witnesses; but when they exercised the gifts of "tongues," of "wisdom," &c. or imparted any divine powers to others, they did so by virtue of their appointment by the Spirit. The one class of miraculous evidence exactly corresponds to the other. Nor is this correspondence diminished by the circumstance, that these gifts were also the means whereby the Holy Spirit taught and spread Christianity, but is rather increased thereby; for a

like purpose did even the testimonial miracles wrought by our Saviour serve, as has been already, it is presumed, sufficiently proved and illustrated.

*Foundation of the Church of Antioch<sup>1</sup>.*

This second period of the Holy Spirit's dispensation does not require that we should pause long on any of the transactions which it embraces. Whilst the conversion of Cornelius was taking place, and indeed after Peter had made the Church acquainted with the new enactment of the Spirit respecting the devout Gentiles, those Christians who were scattered abroad still continued to call and to baptize only Jews. At length, certain converts of Cyprus and Cyrene having, doubtless, heard of Peter's revelation, boldly followed his example, and obeyed the command of their divine Guide, in attempting the conversion of the Gentiles also. Going to Antioch of Syria, they there commenced their labours; "and the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great multitude believed and turned unto the Lord<sup>m</sup>." On tidings of this being brought to the Church at Jerusalem, they took the matter into their own hands, and gave directions for the formation of the first Gentile Church. The commission was intrusted to Barnabas, al-

<sup>1</sup> Acts xi. 22. <sup>m</sup> Acts xi. 19—21.

though, from the sacred narrative, it does not appear under what precise character he went. Little more is specified, than that he exhorted them to perseverance on his arrival, and, (as a reason probably for his appointment,) that he was "a good man, full of faith and of the Holy Ghost." This description might merely imply, that being more highly and fully endowed with the gifts of the Holy Ghost, than the above-mentioned Cyprian and Cyrenian preachers, he was better fitted for the work of conversion. But when we also read that the hand of the Lord was already with these, and that the work prospered greatly under their management, this could hardly be the reason. What seems more likely is, that they had no presbyter among them, and that therefore their Church establishment was incomplete without one. Barnabas then might have been sent to them in that capacity. But a more probable reason still suggests itself. Is there not some ground to suppose that he went in the character of an apostle? In this case this higher office might supersede, and for a time render unnecessary, the inferior one of presbyter. What gives some shew of plausibility to this is, that we know Barnabas had the title of apostle<sup>n</sup>. If appointed as such, and in the same manner as the others, that appointment, as was before suggested, must have taken place at a period

<sup>n</sup> Acts xiv. 14.



preceding this. Now we know that when Samaria was first converted, although he who instructed and baptized there was no less a person than Philip the deacon, yet the Church of Jerusalem sent thither two apostles\*. The reason for sending these has been explained. It was because none but apostles could confer the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, and these gifts or some of them were probably granted to all members of the infant Church. The instance of St. Paul regretting that he had not been able to visit the Roman converts for this purpose, was noticed in illustration of the truth of this statement. On so important a conversion then as this at Antioch, we are naturally led to expect the same procedure on the part of the Church of Jerusalem, as was observed in the conversion of Samaria. Finding it recorded, that, as on that occasion an official embassy was appointed to Antioch, we naturally expect that he whom they sent (ἀπέστειλαν) should be an apostle, and that he should be sent for a similar purpose as Peter and John had been to Samaria. In Barnabas accordingly we find much which renders it by no means improbable that he was one, especially if viewed in connection with the presumption arising out of that embassy. To all that has been already suggested, in accordance with this view, it may be added, that, for no

\* Acts viii. 14.

reason assigned, Barnabas's name always precedes Paul's, although the latter was equally proved to be "full of the Holy Ghost," until by inflicting blindness on the sorcerer Elymas he displayed his evidence, that he was not only a minister of the Spirit, but one bearing a commission also from the Lord Jesus,—in short, an apostle<sup>p</sup>. Does not this then seem to intimate, that up to that period Barnabas was treated as Paul's superior? Afterwards, we may observe, the order is not reversed, but sometimes the one name, sometimes the other, takes precedence. Doubtless, Paul's is thenceforward more frequently placed first; but this, if it affect the argument at all, only renders the circumstance noticed more remarkable.

Supposing Barnabas to have been an apostle, a reason obviously suggests itself, why, in preference to the others, he should be chosen for this mission. "A Levite and of the country of Cyprus," is the

<sup>p</sup> Acts xiii. 8. He is however called a prophet in ver. 1. perhaps because he is there described as exercising the office of prophet, which was no doubt comprehended in the apostolic commission. Eusebius (lib. i. c. 12.) suggests, that others besides the twelve must have been called apostles during our Lord's abode on earth. His conjecture is founded on St. Paul's account of the Resurrection, in the fifteenth chapter of his first Epistle to the Corinthians. It must be confessed, however, that his interpretation of the passage is a forced one; and the notion is besides inconsistent with the indifferent use which is constantly made by the Evangelists of the terms "the apostles" and "the twelve." It is moreover expressly contradicted by St. Luke's assertion, (c. vi. 13.) "He chose twelve, whom he named apostles."

character under which he is first introduced to our notice<sup>q</sup>. Belonging then to the numerous settlement of Jews in that island, he was naturally fixed on as the most proper apostle for converts who had received their first instruction and baptism from his fellow-countrymen, perhaps from his friends or acquaintance<sup>r</sup>.

<sup>q</sup> Acts iv. 36.

<sup>r</sup> In this view of the Church of Antioch, the reader of the New Testament in the original Greek will perceive, that of the two rival readings given in Acts xi. 20. "Ἑλλῆνις has been adopted in preference to Ἑλληνισταί. Waving so much of the question, as depends on the balance of authority between the manuscripts, the circumstances of the record, and the context itself plainly determines the former to be genuine. For the opposition expressed by the particles, *μὲν* and *δὲ*, indicate that the Cyprians and Cyrenians were not doing what the dispersed were doing, namely, preaching to the Jews alone; but that they, on the contrary, were preaching, to whom? Not *ἐς τοὺς Ἑλληνιστάς*, for they *were Jews*, and to them by the dispersed the Gospel had been preached as in the case of Philip, but *πρὸς τοὺς Ἑλλήνας*—to the Gentiles, namely, the devout Gentiles.

Among the circumstances which confirm this, it would be wrong to pass over the notice, that at Antioch the disciples were first called Christians. Why such a record should be left by the inspired historian,—why the name should appear just there, and should have been wanted and coined just then, are questions which will be naturally answered by reference to the event which had lately and only now taken place. The word Christian is obviously Latin, and the Roman language was now so widely spread, that whether the Gentile converts were natives of Rome or not, the invention of the term by them is likely. Its use by the Jewish Christians too would be natural. Before any Gentile Christians had been made, the "believers" were only a sect of the Jews. But when these Gentiles were added, the strange admixture seemed to call

*St. Paul's revelation and appointment'.*

To the establishment of the Church of Antioch, the first society which admitted the Gentiles as brethren and members of one *Christian* body, we may reasonably attribute the second burst of malignant feeling in the Jewish unbelievers towards their believing brethren. At their instance, Herod put to death James the brother of John ; and his imprisonment of Peter, with the intent to execute him also, is said to have taken place, because he observed that the former “pleased the Jews.” Peter, indeed, would at this time be naturally the chief object of their vengeance, and could have escaped from the fate which they had prepared for him only by the interposition of God’s angel. On his deliverance from prison he left Jerusalem, as it is probable all the other apostles had already done. St. Paul, at least, when he undertakes to shew the impossibility of his having received his instruction from the other apostles, instead of what he asserted to be the case, from Christ himself, and for this purpose enu-

for some associating name, to denote that these last were, in common with the others, members of the believing body—some term was now requisite to class together the converted Jews with the converted Gentiles. The word *Christian* was expressive of the doctrine, that “there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek : for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him.”

Acts xiii. 22. xxii. 17.

merates his several visits<sup>t</sup> to Jerusalem, makes no mention of this, which the course of his argument required, had there been at that time any one apostle at Jerusalem<sup>u</sup>.

<sup>t</sup> St. Paul, after his conversion, appears to have visited Jerusalem five times.

I. After his return from Arabia to Damascus, at which time he was introduced to Peter and James by Barnabas. See Acts ix. 26, 28. and Galat. i. 18.

II. When he and Barnabas were sent from Antioch with the contribution. No apostle was then at Jerusalem, but the management of affairs was left to the *elders*. It was during this visit that he probably received his revelation in the temple, as mentioned in 2 Corinth. xii. This visit is omitted in his Epistle to the Galatians. See Acts xi. 30.

III. On his return from his first apostolical journey, when he went with Barnabas to consult the Church of Jerusalem, concerning the obligation of the Mosaic law on the Gentile Christians. It was during this visit that he communicated "his Gospel" privately to Peter, and James, and John. See Acts xv. and Galat. ii.

IV. When, in fulfilment of a vow made at Cenchræa, he went from Ephesus, and returned after a very short stay. Acts xviii. 18, 22.

V. This was at the close of his third apostolical journey, when he went up to keep the feast of Pentecost, and to declare *openly to all the Church* "his Gospel," or his mission to the idolatrous Gentiles.

<sup>u</sup> See the first and second chapters of his Epistle to the Galatians. His statement there is, that he could have had *no opportunity* of being instructed by the apostles, because on his first visit to Jerusalem he only saw two of them, and that for fifteen days, and no more; and, when again he was fourteen years afterwards in their company, he was employed, not in *receiving*, but *communicating* his revelation to them. The account



Trifling as the circumstance is, it becomes important when connected with the evidence of Paul's immediate and apostolic revelation. How it happened that he should go to Jerusalem at that particular juncture will be readily recollected. Soon after Barnabas had been sent to preside over the Church of Antioch, he went to Tarsus, and brought back with him Saul as his coadjutor. Tradition reports, that they were educated together under Gamaliel ; which, if true, accounts for the friendly office which he had previously performed in introducing him to Peter and James<sup>x</sup> ; as well as for his now choosing him to be his associate. At the very commencement of their joint labours, the disturbances to which we have been adverting occurred at Jerusalem. Among those who, together with the apostles, withdrew from the scene of danger, were very probably the prophets, who then made their appearance at Antioch, and gave notice of a famine which was to take place throughout Judæa. It was for the purpose of conveying to Jerusalem a contribution, which was in consequence raised and sent as

in the Acts agrees with this, but then, between these two visits, occurs the one in question ; and, if he had found any apostles at Jerusalem, his argument was of course open to the objection—how do we know that the borrowed information may not *then* have been received.

<sup>x</sup> Only to these, by his own account, (See Galat. i.) and accordingly he asserts, that after that first visit he was still unknown by face to the Churches of Judæa.

a provision against the season of distress, that Barnabas and his companion went thither. They went accordingly, not commissioned to the apostles—nor to the apostles and brethren—but only to the *presbyters*<sup>y</sup>. The apostles were absent, and the presbyters, or those who represented the disciples at large, were all who composed the assembly.

During this visit then of Saul to Jerusalem, he received that revelation which was hitherto wanting to complete in him the character of an apostle<sup>z</sup>. Falling into a trance in the temple, he was permitted, like the other apostles, to be an “eye-witness of the resurrection,” to see his Lord and his God manifested in the flesh<sup>a</sup>; and, like the rest, to receive from Jesus himself the appointment of witness, and the powers attached to it<sup>b</sup>. All that

<sup>y</sup> Acts xi. 30.

<sup>z</sup> Ἰδεῖν τὸν δίκαιον, καὶ ἀκοῦσαι φωνὴν ἐκ τοῦ στόματος αὐτοῦ. Ὅτι ἔσθ' ἡ μαρτυρία αὐτοῦ πρὸς πάντας ἀνθρώπους, ὃν ἰώρακας καὶ ἤκουσας.

<sup>a</sup> 2 Cor. xii. Acts xxii. 17, 18.

<sup>b</sup> The period when this took place is not distinctly marked in the New Testament; and it is generally referred to the first visit to Jerusalem. But direct testimony being wanting, it is surely more natural to assign it to the visit which immediately preceded his formal appointment by the Church at Antioch, and his entrance on the course of duty, with a view to which the revelation was made. This, too, is more agreeable to the train of argument which he adopts in his Epistle to the Galatians, and to which allusion has already been made. If he professed to have received his Gospel during the fifteen days of his first visit to Jerusalem, it might have been supposable, at least by his objectors, that it came from Peter and John, and not, as he asserts,

portion of the apostolical character, which it was the office of the Holy Ghost to confer, had been previously bestowed on him. He had now all the endowments of an apostle, and, thus qualified, he returned with Barnabas to Antioch, ready to enter upon the work with which the third period of the Holy Spirit's dispensation commences. John (better known by the name of Mark) accompanied them<sup>c</sup>.

from Jesus Christ; but, in the absence of all the apostles from the scene, even this slight ground for suspicion was removed.

It is somewhat surprising, by the way, that any doubt on the subject of Paul's apostleship should have existed, considering that an apostle was known by so unequivocal a mark as the possession of *superior miraculous power*. On this, accordingly, he ultimately rests his claims, and prevails over the jealous attempts of his rivals and enemies.—It is surprising, but it is, after all, quite consistent with the waywardness of man's heart.

<sup>c</sup> Acts xii. 25.

## CHAP. IV.

### PREACHING TO JEWS, DEVOUT GENTILES, AND IDOLATERS.

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#### ST. PAUL'S FIRST APOSTOLICAL JOURNEY.

A. D. 45—52.

##### ROUTE.

Antioch in Syria; Seleucia; Salamis; Paphos; Perga in Pamphylia; Antioch in Pisidia; Iconium; Lystra; Derbe; Lystra again; Iconium again; Pisidia again; Perga again; Attalia; Antioch in Syria, (second time;) Phœnicia; Samaria; Jerusalem; Antioch in Syria, (third time.)<sup>a</sup>

**THE** return of Paul and Barnabas to Antioch was followed by their formal mission to the idolatrous Gentiles<sup>b</sup>. And here we cannot but observe how carefully the Holy Spirit has declared, in its dealings with the early Church, that from the first its operations, as guide and governor, were twofold; that it exercised an occasional and extraordinary authority, by means of visions, and sundry forms of revelation, inspiration, and endowment; and also a permanent authority, unaccompanied by extraordinary signs,

<sup>a</sup> Acts xiii. to xv. 30.

<sup>b</sup> Acts xi. 26.

by means of the Church as a body, which Church was and is its Temple. Thus the intercourse of the Holy Spirit with Christians, as a society, was not unlike his intercourse with them as individuals. Of the Church he required certain established forms, the laying on of hands, prayer, and fasting, and to these attached his ordinary operations. These were indispensable to its authority, and of perpetual obligation, whatever further extraordinary acts were manifested. Notwithstanding then that Barnabas and Saul had been appointed to the conversion of the Gentiles by an especial communication of the Holy Ghost, it was necessary, we find, that some further grace should be imparted,—some further sanction given to them, which could only be conveyed, according to the system of the Spirit's dispensation, through certain forms and ceremonies of the Church. Without these forms the Church had no power to confer, and the individuals were incapable of receiving, a portion of the spiritual endowment<sup>c</sup>.

The mode in which grace was conferred on individuals, was analogous to that in which authority was given to the Church. It mattered not what extraordinary gifts were bestowed; as *Christians*,—as *redeemed*, they were obliged to be formally baptized. The extraordinary gifts of the Spirit descended on them as *agents* and *instruments*, employed for the *general welfare*; the ordinary gifts, as objects

<sup>c</sup> Acts ix. 15. xiii. 2.



of regeneration and redemption, and for their *individual* welfare. Many individuals are conspicuous for both kinds of endowment; and so it was with the Church itself. There was an ordinary grace or authority in it, which it exercised by means of stated forms, and independently of all extraordinary manifestations: and ever as occasion required, that same divine person, who dwelt in it, and from whom the authority proceeded, gave some extraordinary display of his government. In both cases, what was occasional has passed away; what was regular and continual still remains.

In making these assertions, however, we must be prepared to meet two questions.

The first is, how do we know, that there was in the early Church a secret and regular operation of the Holy Ghost exercised in these outward forms?

Secondly, how do we know, that it did not cease with the extraordinary operation?

The case now offering itself for consideration, namely, the appointment of Barnabas and Saul, is one of several which furnish to every candid mind a sufficient reply to the first question. The bare circumstance, that the forms of fasting, laying on of hands, and prayer, were observed even with persons "full of the Holy Ghost," and already called to be apostles of the Lord, is a strong ground of presumption that such was the case. But the terms of the narrative render it yet stronger,

“ Then having fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, dismissed them ; *they then, having been sent forth by the Holy Spirit,*” &c.<sup>d</sup> In the original, the connection between the two sentences is perhaps more forcibly marked by *οὕτως*, than by the English illative conjunction “ then.” Without reference, however, to grammatical nicety, no one can read the sentences, and attend to the train of thought running through them, and through the whole passage to which they belong, without acknowledging that their being sent forth by the Holy Ghost referred to the ceremony of prayer, &c. Nor does it affect the argument, that the Holy Ghost had specially directed the Church to ordain these men. For, that this was only a revelation of God’s will and special interference, and not an investiture of power delegated to the Church, is manifest,—inasmuch as the investiture of power had already taken place, and the words of the divine message contain a reference to it as already in force, and are, indeed, an acknowledgment and proof that it was so. “ The Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I *have* called them<sup>e</sup>.”

The next question was, supposing this ordinary and indispensable operation of the Spirit to have been exercised in the primitive Church, how do we certainly know that it did not cease with that which

<sup>d</sup> Acts xiii. 3, 4.      • Acts xiii. 2.

was extraordinary? If the latter was given as a sign of the reality of the former, the sign being removed, what proof have we now that the thing attested exists?

To this also there is an adequate reply; and it depends on the truth of this proposition, "If we are assured that God has appointed any outward forms as the means of divine grace or divine authority, we are bound to believe that they will continue effectual, until God has annulled the appointment." If instead of the ceremony of baptism, *e. g.* it had pleased Him to appoint a pool like that of Bethesda, which at certain seasons should be troubled by his angel; and to ordain, that all who had diseases should go to that pool on these occasions to bathe for their recovery: we should be bound to rely on the efficacy of the pool, until God should make known that his decree had been annulled. In the case of the pool, this would require no *positive* sign; because the *effects being sensible*, when the water ceased to heal, its failure would be of itself proof that God had ceased to impart a virtue to it. On the same principle, no formal, no positive sign or revelation was necessary, to inform the Church that the extraordinary operation of the Spirit and the power of working miracles were withdrawn. The failure of its ministers in their attempts to work miracles, was itself the sign that God had annulled the temporary grant. But as the ordinary operations of the Spirit were *always* unseen and unfelt,

the only indication of their failure and cessation would be a *positive revelation*. Until such is given, we are obliged to believe in them as a duty, and have as much reason to do so, as to suppose that to-morrow the sun will be the means of conveying light and warmth.

But to return to Barnabas, Saul, and their assistant Mark, whom we left preparing for their journey. Their course was through Cyprus first, (probably on account of the connection of Barnabas with that island,) thence across to the continent, and through the countries of Pamphylia, Pisidia, and Lycaonia<sup>f</sup>. As they were about to leave Cyprus, Mark must have become more alive to the risk of the enterprise; for, although thus far their reception had been gracious, he forsook the apostles and returned<sup>g</sup>. His place seems to have been supplied by Titus, although it is not expressly so stated. Adverting to what has been already observed of the office of deacons, it is not unlikely that Mark had accompanied the apostles in that capacity, and that on his refusal to proceed, some one would be wanted to act as deacon in the performance of the Christian Church service, wherever there might be an opportunity. That Titus was accordingly sent for—possibly from Antioch—is inferred from his being found in their company at the end of the journey<sup>h</sup>.

The mode in which the mission was conducted

<sup>f</sup> Acts xiii. 4.

<sup>g</sup> Acts xiii. 13.

<sup>h</sup> Gal. ii. 1.

was, as the reader may recollect, to preach first to the Jews and proselyted Gentiles, and then to the idolaters<sup>i</sup>. Notwithstanding this marked precedence and preference, all their persecutions arose from the former. From the Gentiles (when the Jews did not prepossess their minds against them) all they had to fear as yet, was a misapprehension of their object,—lest their miracles might make them appear to the multitude as “ gods come down to them in the shape of men<sup>k</sup>.”

Another point to be observed in their proceedings is, that they ordained presbyters in every Church on their return<sup>l</sup>. So brief a ministry could hardly have qualified any of the new converts for the office, unless some miraculous interposition of the Spirit had taken place, such as was supposed to have occurred at Antioch in Pisidia—the first scene of idolatrous conversion<sup>m</sup>.

*Decree of the Council of Jerusalem<sup>n</sup>.*

Before St. Paul renewed his labours among the idolatrous Gentiles, he was commissioned by the Church of Syrian Antioch to proceed with Barnabas to Jerusalem, for the purpose of taking the sense of the Church there respecting a question which was now warmly canvassed at Antioch<sup>o</sup>. Peter's mis-

<sup>i</sup> Acts xiii. 46.      <sup>k</sup> Acts xiv. 11.      <sup>l</sup> Acts xiv. 23.

<sup>m</sup> Acts xi. 26.      <sup>n</sup> Acts xv.      <sup>o</sup> Acts xv. 1, 2.



sion, as was observed, received indeed the sanction of Judaizing Christians ; but their old prejudices were still so strong, as to make them expect that these new associates, to whom the apostles had opened the gate of Christianity, should first pass through that of Judaism. They accordingly insisted on the Gentile converts at Antioch being circumcised, and made to conform to all the Jewish law. Jerusalem being still the residence of the apostles, and therefore the chief seat of Church authority, to Jerusalem was the decision of the question referred.

That the decree of the Christian body there, only related to the devout Gentile Christians is certain ; because none but these had as yet been admitted into the Church of Antioch. What confirms this is, that the decree was obviously framed with reference to their condition as such.

St. Peter spoke first in the assembly which had been called for discussing the question, and declared his opinion to be, that on the Gentile party the Church ought not to impose a burthen of ceremonies which neither the Jewish party nor their fathers could bear. St. James supported him in his view of the question, and proposed the words of the decree, in a manner which shews that he fully coincided with St. Peter, and did not think that he was placing any yoke on the neck of the Gentile converts *which they had not borne before* their conversion. “ Wherefore my opinion is, not to introduce any thing which may disturb and con-

found those Gentiles who turn to God<sup>p</sup>; but to command them to abstain from meats offered to idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood<sup>q</sup>,”—that is, to command them to observe just so much and no more of the Jewish law as they had observed before Christianity was preached to them. To this they would hardly object, (as the apostle probably means to say,) because, in every part of the world, the devout Gentiles readily consented to keep these few observances of the Jewish law, however unwilling to

<sup>p</sup> This is certainly the force of *παρά*. The word *περιεχλαῖν* expresses that confusion of thought which would almost certainly have been produced in the mind of a convert taught Judaism and Christianity together, as two distinct systems. He was in danger of considering them both necessary and both coexistent, rather than successive portions of the same religion.

Even as it was, such was doubtless the impression made on the minds of many, for the first century, and longer. That Tertullian, e. g. considered it in this light is more than probable. See *Apol.* sect. 9.

This non-interference with established usages beyond what was absolutely necessary, was, it is to be observed, in exact conformity with the method by which the Jewish religion had been established. The Jews had been allowed to retain many Egyptian rites, as Warburton points out in his fourth book of the *Divine Legation*; and hence, the error of assigning a heathen origin to several of the corruptions of the Christian Church, which, although manifestly resembling heathen ceremonies, were immediately derived from the Jews. Some, doubtless, were immediately drawn from Gentile practices; but not all which correspond with heathen rites.

<sup>q</sup> Acts xv. 19, 20.

burthen themselves further, and to become proselytes of righteousness. “For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath day <sup>r</sup>.”

When, therefore, Paul is afterwards represented as distributing this sentence or opinion of the Council of Jerusalem to the several Churches through which he passed in his second journey, it cannot be supposed that he intended to recommend it as a rule binding on the converts from idolatry also. This, indeed, would be wholly irreconcilable with his own repeated declarations to them in his Epistles<sup>s</sup>, and is not implied by any statement in St. Luke’s narrative. It may be even doubted whether St. Paul’s preaching to the idolatrous Gentiles was at that time known generally to the Churches of Judæa, or to that particular Council of Jerusalem. It is said, indeed, that the conversion of the Gentiles was proclaimed by Paul and Barnabas as they passed through Phœnicia and Samaria in their journey to Jerusalem, and that they even

<sup>r</sup> Acts xv. 21.

<sup>s</sup> Inter al. Rom. xiv. 14, “I know and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus, that there is nothing unclean in itself.” 1 Corinth. x. 25, “Whatsoever is sold in the shambles, that eat, asking no questions for conscience sake.” Rom. xiv. 17, “The kingdom of God is not meat and drink.” Colos. ii. 16, “Let no man judge you in meat or in drink.” 1 Tim. iv. 4, “Every creature of God is good and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving.”

reported to the Church there<sup>t</sup>, “all things that God had done *with them*”<sup>u</sup>.” But still, the whole account, considered as a whole, looks very much as if they were understood by all—by all, at least, except the apostles—to speak of the devout Gentiles. That there was a good reason why St. Paul should not yet venture to give publicity to his mission, nobody will question, who considers the rancorous persecution which assailed him, when the Jewish Christians, (for the first time, as it seems,) became acquainted with it. Possibly for this very reason the appointment took place at Antioch, and not at Jerusalem. His own account of this transaction, too, as given in his Epistle to the Galatians, is that he told the secret privately, and only to Peter, James, and John, “lest by any means he should run, or had run, in vain”<sup>x</sup>.” The narrative of the last visit which he paid to Jerusalem tends to produce the same impression. He is represented as explaining his ministry to the Church, in terms which strongly indicate that the whole Church then for the first time understood the nature of it. On this occasion it is particularly recorded, that *all the presbyters* were present<sup>y</sup>. His Gospel is then more

<sup>t</sup> Acts xv. 4.

<sup>u</sup> This and the like expressions may be noticed in reference to the distinction pointed out between the miracles of Jesus and those of his apostles.

<sup>x</sup> Gal. ii. 2.

<sup>y</sup> Acts xxi. 18.

pointedly declared to be one appropriated to him, the details of it are given one by one, (*καὶ ἐν ἑκαστον*), and the assembly glorify God, as for some new and marvellous act<sup>2</sup>. Then, too, it is for the first time thought necessary to warn him of the danger to which his mission was likely to expose him from the Jewish party: and it is then, indeed, that he first incurs any risk amongst his countrymen at Jerusalem; although the same reason had long been operating to render him an object of deadly hatred to Jews and Judaizing Christians out of Palestine.

And how did the persecution commence? Not with the Jews residing at Jerusalem; but after he had been almost seven days in the temple, without incurring any suspicion from them, "*the Jews which were of Asia*," (and who doubtless recognized him as the person they had often seen preaching to the idolaters, and who perhaps had before this assaulted him,) when they saw him in the temple, stirred up all the people, and laid hands on him, "crying out, Men of Israel, help: this is the man that teacheth all men every where against the people, and the law, and this place<sup>3</sup>," &c.

One powerful objection, it must be confessed, bears upon this supposition. If it be correct, the most important act of the blessed Spirit's dispensation, and the most remarkable, must have re-

<sup>2</sup> Acts xxi. 19, 20.

<sup>3</sup> Acts xxi. 27, 28.



mained a secret from the Church of Jerusalem (the apostles being excepted) for fifteen years. Whether our familiarity with the ordinary modes of communication in modern days, may not cause us unduly to magnify the objection, especially as the want of such modes must have been peculiarly felt in the intercourse between the members of a poor and suspected sect on domestic affairs, the reader is left to consider. However, be it allowed or not, it must be admitted that this would not be a solitary instance of a strange ignorance in one part of the Christian society of its proceedings elsewhere. What, for instance, could have been a more interesting subject of report than the conversion of St. Paul? And yet, although this took place almost on the borders of Judæa, it is clear that the apostles themselves could not have known it for certain, when after an interval of several years he visited Jerusalem; else it would not have been necessary for Barnabas to assure them of it, before they received him to their confidence and fellowship<sup>b</sup>. The ignorance of those disciples of John Baptist whom St. Paul met with in Asia Minor, whether there was any Holy Ghost, is another similar case<sup>c</sup>.

But, whatever was the information of the Church of Jerusalem respecting the admission of idolatrous converts to Christianity, the decree of the Council

<sup>b</sup> Acts ix. 27.

<sup>c</sup> Acts xviii. 24. to xix. 2, 3.

could not, for the reasons assigned, have been intended to apply to them also. The proselytes of the gate—the devout Gentiles—were enjoined to observe the rules enumerated, on the principle, that Christianity did not interfere with any civil or social institution, but left the members of all societies bound, as before, by their social or civil obligations. On this principle it was, doubtless, that St. Paul circumcised Timothy, and not, Titus<sup>d</sup>; and, on the same principle, the Church was not inconsistent in observing the first day of the week, as appears from Acts xx. 7. and also the seventh day of the week, as appears from Acts xiii. 14, 42. and xvi. 13. These points they observed as partial adherents of the Jewish society; and accordingly, when Jerusalem was destroyed, its rites overthrown, and the nation *as a nation* annihilated, they, as well as the Jewish Christians themselves, were released from the obligation. Some superstitious observance of the decree indeed long existed in the Church, although it does not appear to have been by any means generally looked on as binding<sup>e</sup>. Still, its di-

<sup>d</sup> Acts xvi. 3. and Gal. ii. 3.

<sup>e</sup> See Justin Martyr, *Dialog. cum Trypho*, p. 237. Origen, *cont. Celsum*, lib. viii. c. 30. and Tertullian *Apolog.* c. 9. In like manner, we find the eastern Churches in the second century alleging the example of St. John and St. Philip for celebrating Easter on the day of the Jewish Passover, while the western Churches urged the practice of St. Peter and St. Paul in support of their observance of the day of the Resurrection. The question

rections are sanctioned in the decrees of at least one council<sup>f</sup>, and its authority has from time to time been recognized by several Christian communities<sup>g</sup>.

Individuals, too, among the most learned and enlightened of later times, have maintained its perpetual authority,—Grotius among others. That the introduction of one moral rule into the list of injunctions might have biassed these, in their view of it, is not impossible. In rejecting it they seemed to be annulling, not only the precept to abstain from meats offered to idols and from blood, but that also which forbade fornication. Lightfoot accordingly avoids the scruple by making fornication and polygamy synonymous. And, that the word translated “fornication” should embrace under its general signification polygamy and adultery is perhaps admissible; but that it should be applied to either specifically, is more than can be proved. In truth, all the doubt and difficulty may be traced to a false, or rather an indistinct, view

was not set at rest until the decree of the Nicene Council on the subject; and even then some refused to acquiesce, and were on that account stigmatized as *Quartodecimani*.

<sup>f</sup> Conc. Gangr. can. 2.

<sup>g</sup> The more rigid Anabaptists have maintained its perpetual obligation on Christians; and likewise the sect founded by Glass and Sandeman in the beginning of the last century. The Copts are reported not only to observe the decree, but to circumcise; probably with the view of conciliating the Mahometans. See Boone’s *Book of Churches and Sects*, p. 163.

of the true character of the Jewish law, of which this was, after all, only a portion. As the observance of the old law was sanctioned by the apostle in the case of those Christians who had been subject to it before their conversion; so, in the case of the proselytes of the gate, that portion of it which extended to them received a similar sanction.

The Mosaic law, it is well known, comprises moral commandments and ceremonial rules all blended together, not only in the great body of Jewish Scripture, but even in the Ten Commandments written by the finger of God. The command to keep the seventh day as a sabbath is there found side by side with those which enjoin love to God and our neighbour, and with those which prohibit murder, theft, adultery, and false-witness. Nevertheless, a distinction is drawn by universal consent between the two portions of the law. It is agreed, that the ceremonial part has been abrogated, the moral left in force; and this is true, and for all practical purposes sufficient. It would, however, be a more exact and correct mode of expressing the truth, to say, that the whole of the Mosaic law was done away with, *as far as it was binding because found in the law of Moses*; but that the moral portion of the law continues in force, because it was in force prior to the promulgation of the Mosaic law. If, for instance, the sinfulness of murder depends on its being a

violation of the sixth commandment, then was Cain guiltless<sup>h</sup>.

Why what was already written on men's hearts should have been specified in God's written law ; whether it be, that in this, as in the whole course of God's dealings with man, each succeeding revelation was a comment on the former ; or that these precepts were incorporated with the ceremonial or judicial law, in order to annex to them civil and temporal rewards and punishments, are questions which need not now be discussed. It is enough for the present purpose that such was the case. Now, the Gentiles, *as members of the human race*, had all the moral law engraven on their hearts ; " their consciences," as St. Paul tells us, " accusing or else excusing them<sup>i</sup>." In admitting these, therefore, to a partial fellowship with them, (such as the proselyte of the gate enjoyed,) it was not to be expected that the Jews would enjoin on them any rules beyond those which were ceremonial, and of these only enough to serve as a badge of distinction, and a test of sincere proselytism. The observance of the moral law would

<sup>h</sup> Tertullian points out the manner in which our first parents may be convicted of having violated every command in the Decalogue by eating the forbidden fruit ; and thence argues for the *prior* existence of a law equivalent in authority and import to the Decalogue. Such a law has been communicated and is registered on every man's *conscience*. See his Tract. adv. Judæos, c. 2. See also Whately's Essays, Second Series, Essay 5.

<sup>i</sup> Rom. ii. 15.



be considered as otherwise binding. History, however, sufficiently explains, why it may have been expedient to place among these ceremonial rules one moral precept, that, namely, which enjoined them to abstain from fornication. Murder, theft, false-witness, and all other moral offences, were still universally recognized as such by the consent of conscience in all. Fornication, alone, was not merely a common vice, but had ceased to be generally regarded as a sin. In its *excess* only it was held to be blameworthy<sup>1</sup>. What more natural, therefore, than that the Jews should bind the proselyte, by an express law, to abstain from this vice, when he had ceased to feel himself bound to do so by the law of nature. And it is a coincidence worthy of notice, that the denial of a moral obligation in this particular has formed a prominent feature in the ethical systems of the most celebrated modern infidels, Bolingbroke, Hume, Voltaire, Helvetius.

If this view of the subject be correct, it will appear, that when the authority of the decree of Jerusalem ceased, Christians were thereby no more absolved from the duty of continence, than they were, by the cessation of the authority of the whole law of Moses, from the duty of honouring their parents, or abstaining from theft and murder. In-

<sup>1</sup> *Ne sequer mœchas, concessa cum Venere uti,  
Possem, &c.* HORACE.

deed, he who is contented to do only what forms an express precept in holy writ, and to abstain from that only which is formally forbidden, misapplies the Scriptures. On man's conscience alone it is that the whole moral law is written, like the Ten Commandments, by the finger of God himself, but not, like these, in perishable characters. This was the first revelation of God to man, and coexistent with his creation; and even the last dispensation was not at all designed to supersede the use of this original internal revelation. The New Testament does not contain any code of ethics; it only alludes to the moral law as already known and provided; or seeks to correct and reform those parts which, although engraven perfect on man's heart by God, had become indistinct, and, in some few instances, nearly effaced. It furnishes *motives* to the observance of this law, and *promises assistance* in the performance of it. This, and not *a revelation of the moral law*, is the instruction which a Christian is to expect from his Bible. As the author of this instruction, our Lord speaks of himself, and of him whom he was to send to us, under the title of God *encouraging* us, (that is, exciting us by new motives, and new promises of aid,) and not under that of lawgiver: “ ἄλλον Παράκλητον δώσει ὑμῖν—He shall give you *another Comforter*.”

So much for the temporary character of this famous decree, whatever authority it may be sup-

<sup>k</sup> John xiv. 16.

posed to have had while it remained in force. On this point, much difference of opinion has existed. Our estimate of its authority must, of course, greatly depend on the character we assign to the persons who composed the assembly, and the circumstances under which they were acting. Without, therefore, referring to the specific conclusions which have been drawn, either for or against the authority of general councils, from the various assumptions with regard to this, it will be plainer, and less tedious, to state concisely the leading questions by which those views may be elicited, and to direct the attention to that which appears on the whole to be the most satisfactory reply.

I. The first question is, Was this a general council? that is, did it represent the whole Church? or only one branch of it, namely, the Church of Jerusalem? There is nothing in St. Luke's account of it to imply, even remotely, that it assumed the former character. It was not general, as composed of the heads of all the Churches, for none were present but the ambassadors of Antioch; and these came to consult, and not to join the council: nor again as composed of all the apostles; for St. Paul, and doubtless St. Barnabas too, were apostles; and they were present indeed<sup>1</sup>, but it was in the character of *ambassadors*, and not of delegates.

II. The next question is, Was it an inspired or

<sup>1</sup> Acts xv. 22.

uninspired council? The opponents of the authority of general councils, in later times, have mainly insisted on the former view; and point out this circumstance as creating the essential line between this and any that has been subsequently held. The learned and candid Mosheim agrees so far with this view, as to suppose, that all the business on this occasion being left to the apostles, they as inspired persons, must have pronounced an inspired decision<sup>1</sup>. Perhaps all inquiries into the ecclesiastical affairs of this extraordinary period lean too much to the notion, that every transaction in which an inspired person appears, must have been the result of *immediate* inspiration. As far as the narrative guides us, no such intimation is given in the present instance; and it may be safely asserted, that the apostles themselves were not throughout their ministry passive agents of the Holy Spirit<sup>m</sup>. The

<sup>1</sup> De Rebus Christian. ante Const. Magn. p. 153.

<sup>m</sup> Thus St. Paul writes to the Corinthians, "Unto the married I command—not *I*, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from her husband," &c. "But to the rest speak *I*, not the Lord, If any brother hath a wife," &c. See 1 Corinth. vii. 10, 12.

The greater part of what the apostles wrote was, doubtless, entirely the suggestion of their own minds, and, properly speaking, *uninspired*. Its *authority* is not at all diminished by this circumstance, if we grant (what it would be absurd to doubt) that every wrong suggestion must have been checked by the impulse of the Spirit, every deficiency supplied by actual revelation, and every failure or fault of memory miraculously remedied. The *revelation* was *miraculous*, but it was recorded just as any man would record any ordinary information which might be the

office of that blessed Comforter was to guide them to the truth, when the truth could not otherwise be obtained. He watched over the proceedings of that assembly, doubtless, as he has ever watched over the concerns of the Church to this day. Judging from the apparent course of his government, we should say, that had there been error suggested, his presence would have been manifested, or a divine impulse given to some particular members of the council—but not otherwise. It was Christ only whose inspiration was perpetual, and who needed no fresh communication as new emergencies presented themselves". What was meant by the

result of reasoning, or of report. The Bible is the only book in the world which appeals to God for its authority, without affecting or pretending to the immediate authorship of God. Mahomet publishes, but Allah indites, the Koran; and its very style is more than human. The authors of the Bible, on the other hand, write, as God's servants act. The modes of thought, the manner, the language, are different in each, and in each, no less than his actions, his own. Here and there are marks of an inspiration which dictates to the very letter; but ordinarily it is only a divine superintendence, preventing error or omission, and interposing only for that purpose. God has enabled man to record and to teach his word, as he has enabled him to do his will; not by superseding the use of his natural faculties, but by aiding them. With a view to both, his Spirit was given, in order to be *called in* when assistance should be needed, and was hence designated by the expressive name ΠΑΡΑΚΛΗΤΟΣ.

" It was, perhaps, to indicate this that the Bible records the failure of the disciples, in their attempt to perform certain miracles. " This kind," says Jesus, " goeth not out but by prayer and fasting." It is not said, that they were *incapable* of performing these miracles, but it is intimated, that their endowment



expression, "It seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us," will perhaps be seen more clearly when we examine the third question.

III. Under what character was the Church of Jerusalem appealed to by the Church of Antioch? Whatever the practice might be in later times, as yet, no jurisdiction was exercised by one Christian society over another—not even by the Church of Jerusalem over her children in Christ. Paul and Barnabas had been sent to convert the idolatrous Gentiles, (important as this measure was beyond all others which engaged the attention of the early Christians,) solely by the appointment of their own Church at Antioch, without the advice or knowledge of the sister Church at Jerusalem. In the present instance, too, they were commissioned with an embassy, the circumstances of which, if duly considered, must satisfy any candid inquirer, that its object was not perhaps even advice and assistance in deliberation. First, certain members of the Church of Jerusalem come to the Church at Antioch *preaching a new doctrine*—a doctrine of which the Church at Antioch had received no intimation, even although Paul so highly favoured was with them. They taught the brethren, and said, "Except ye

was different from Christ's,—that they must first by means of stated forms apply for specific powers from God, and then, indeed, these, and greater than these, should they perform. See Matt. xvii. 21. Mark ix. 29.

\* Acts xv. 28.

be circumcised, after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved<sup>p</sup>.” It was natural, therefore, that they of Antioch should send to Jerusalem, to ascertain whether any credence was to be given to the report of these men who had come from them—whether the Church there, the apostles or other members, had indeed received any new communication from the Holy Spirit, concerning the universal obligation of the Jewish rites, as necessary to salvation. For a full investigation of the matter the Church was assembled, and it being found that the notion had originated with certain unauthorized persons of the Pharisaical sect<sup>q</sup>, in their perverse zeal for the law, Peter and James explained the inexpediency of making any innovation; and Paul and Barnabas were dismissed, together with some members of their own society, to assure the Church of Antioch, that no new revelation had been given on the subject—that their rule at Jerusalem, the only one sanctioned by the Holy Ghost, was to oblige the converts to observe that which they were accustomed to observe before their conversion, and nothing more.

If the foregoing remarks are correct, we must seek elsewhere for the origin of general councils, and find some other foundation for the authority which has since been claimed for them. Elsewhere, also, we must search for an example in the apostolical

<sup>p</sup> Acts xv. 1.<sup>q</sup> Acts xv. 5.

age of one Church exercising jurisdiction over another. As to general councils, indeed, they obviously cease to be practicable as soon as the union of the universal Church has been dissolved; in truth, they were before that event impracticable—the history of these councils prove it—as to all purposes of unanimity. One Church may ask advice of another, or refer a difficult question to another; but for independent and unassociated Churches to meet all in one *council*, is a practical contradiction. It supposes the Church to be one, in the same sense, in which each separate Christian society alone is, and ever was, one, from the first establishment of our faith. Christian Unity, the never-failing plea for these measures, has been so often a topic of bitter controversy, that we need not wonder at its assuming at this day a difficult and subtil character. More of it by and by.

In concluding these remarks, one caution suggests itself, which cannot be too early inserted in a review of the progress of Christianity. It is, not to look at every portion of the ecclesiastical structure as it appears rising under the hands of the divine Builder, as if conveying a correct notion of the finished work. Objects prominent at first, and resembling in their use the scaffolding or props of a real building, were afterwards removed. Others, by the application of new pieces, became so altered as not immediately to be recognized. One part, without undergoing any alteration, was yet gradually

plastered up and removed out of sight. Another; the divine Architect has left to the discretion of posterity, to be modified from time to time so as to suit the changing circumstances of those who were to occupy it. In examining this edifice, much more in the bold attempt to repair it, the most judicious method is, not to begin by comparing it with the rude draughts in which it was projected; but rather to survey the Church as it stands, and removing one by one (where needful) those parts which are detected to be the work of men's hands, and no more, to let the holy Builder's name appear on those parts alone of the remainder, on which it is visible in his own writing. This only is "not to diminish, not to add thereto;" and this is what our reformers did.

We have conducted Paul and Barnabas through their embassy to Jerusalem, and must now prepare to trace their second mission to the idolatrous Gentiles. It is probable that they remained at Antioch no longer than was necessary for securing the disputed rights of the Gentile converts at that place, an office which seems to have devolved on Paul alone. Peter had indeed been the especial apostle of the *devout* Gentiles, of whom alone the Gentile portion of the Church at Antioch was at first composed; and on this account, no doubt, soon followed Paul and Barnabas thither. But his arrival was, probably, only a signal for the zealots to press their point more earnestly. So successful

were they, that the Gentile advocate shrank from his office, and was ready to yield to their demands. Barnabas followed his example. Paul alone retained his firmness, roused his noble fellow-labourer to a sense of his duty, and for a time quieted the spirit of faction<sup>r</sup>.

All was now ready for a second apostolical journey; the Church was at rest, and the services of Barnabas and Paul were no longer required at home. But the reader will recollect, that henceforth he is to trace their course of ministerial labour apart<sup>s</sup>. On the grounds of their separation, and on its probable results, it is unnecessary to dwell; but, leaving Barnabas's future history for a subsequent consideration, let us follow the record of the Holy Spirit, and holding the thread which He has left us, pass on through the gradual enlargement of the covenant, under the agency of the great apostle selected for this purpose.

One previous observation may not, indeed, be unacceptable to him, who feels that it is inconsistent with the character of these good and holy men, friends from their youth, thus to have parted in bitterness, under circumstances which might seem sufficient to have repressed all private differences. Did they part in bitterness? Paul afterwards spoke of Barnabas with respect and affection, and received even Mark into his service when he thought him worthy

<sup>r</sup> Gal. ii. 11. <sup>s</sup> Acts xv. 39.



of it'. But that zeal which was indeed strong enough to have subdued the mere impulse of anger, had a similar power over feelings of friendship, and even over the ties of nature. Who shall say, that in voluntarily separating their course for ever, as appears to have been the case, each was not submitting to a painful restraint, under the consciousness of doing the best for the great good cause? Who shall say, that each may not, by virtue of this very act, have inherited a portion of the reward promised to those who should forsake father, mother, brethren, or friends, for the sake of Christ and of his Gospel?"

Hence we obtain a further proof, if indeed any such be requisite, that the extraordinary inspiration of the apostles was not an *abiding* or *continual* endowment, but only occasional. On matters of doubt or difference the Holy Spirit interposed its aid. But here no interference took place; probably, because the result of the disagreement was most

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. ix. 6. Gal. ii. 9. Col. iv. 10. and 2 Tim. iv. 11.

<sup>u</sup> Both may have done what according to their best judgment was most beneficial to the Gospel. Had one been right, and the other wrong, some special direction would probably have been vouchsafed by their divine Guide. But in this instance, a division of labour, the result of difference of opinion, was no doubt the most advantageous measure which could have been adopted. It was not, therefore, to be expected, that any divine interference should take place, in order to effect that which would be effected by the ordinary course of things; especially if, as is suggested, the resolution was a trial to each.

beneficial to the common welfare; because both were right. By a division of ministerial labour between the only two who had as yet been commissioned to the idolatrous Gentiles, the extension of the Gospel was no doubt promoted. It has been remarked, that Paul only was recommended to the grace of God. St. Luke's silence, however, does not altogether imply, that Barnabas received no such formal dismissal. In Paul's case alone it might be mentioned, because to him now, and to the details of his mission, the narrative was to be limited.

Subscription price, Five Dollars per Annum in Advance. Single Copies, Fifteen Cents. Entered as Second-Class Matter, October 3, 1917. Postpaid. Accepted for mailing at special rate of postage provided for in Act of October 3, 1917. Authorized Second-Class Mail Matter.

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Advertisements should be sent to the Business Manager, The Journal of the American Medical Association, 535 North Dearborn Street, Chicago, Ill.

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Published by The American Medical Association, 535 North Dearborn Street, Chicago, Ill.

Printed at the Chicago Press and Publishing Company, Chicago, Ill.

Second-Class Postage Paid at Chicago, Ill., May 1, 1919.

Postmaster: This publication is entered as second-class matter, October 3, 1917, under No. 100,000, and is authorized to mail at special rate of postage provided for in Act of October 3, 1917.

Acceptance for mailing at special rate of postage provided for in Act of October 3, 1917, authorized on May 1, 1919.

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## CHAP. V.

### ST. PAUL'S SECOND APOSTOLICAL JOURNEY.

A. D. 53—56.

#### ROUTE.

Rest of Syria; Cilicia; Derbe; Lystra; Iconium; Phrygia; Galatia; Troas; Samothracia; Neapolis; Philippi; Amphipolis; Apollonia; Thessalonica; Beræa; Athens; Corinth; Cenchræa; Ephesus; Cæsarea; Jerusalem; Antioch in Syria<sup>y</sup>.

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**SILAS** and Judas Barsabas were the messengers appointed by the Church of Jerusalem to accompany Paul and Barnabas on their return to Antioch<sup>z</sup>. Here Silas was induced to remain, and being a prophet, was fixed on by Paul as the fittest substitute which he could provide for the fellow-labourer of whose assistance he was now to be deprived. Soon after he commenced his journey, he found at Lystra another meet companion in the young and faithful Timothy. At Troas it would seem, from the narrative of the Acts, that Luke was added to their company<sup>a</sup>. This then is the little band of

<sup>y</sup> Acts xv. 41. and xvi. to xviii. 22.

<sup>z</sup> Acts xv. 22.

<sup>a</sup> Acts xvi. 11.

Christian heroes, whose progress, under the second mission of the Holy Spirit to the idolatrous Gentiles, we are now to consider.

In what numbers these were added to the Church cannot be determined from the sacred record. Mention is made of the success of the mission at Philippi, at Beræa, at Athens, and especially at Corinth; and from St. Paul's Epistle to the Thessalonians<sup>b</sup>, it appears that some conversion of idolaters took place amongst these also. Probably some were converted in most of the places through which the apostle and his company journeyed, the notices in the Acts being evidently limited to the more remarkable instances, such as Dionysius the Areopagite, and "the honourable women" at Beræa<sup>c</sup>.

It is not of course intended to pursue the apostle through the several stages of his work, but, agreeably with my plan, only to point to those parts of his route at which for any reason it may be desirable that we should pause.

Thus, passing over the intermediate points of his journey, at Troas we find him receiving from his divine Guide an especial communication. As one of the various modes in which God was wont to visit his servants and the agents of his will, this then deserves to be particularly noticed.

<sup>b</sup> 1 Thess. i.

<sup>c</sup> Acts xvii. 11—13. and 34.



*St. Paul at Troas<sup>c</sup>.*

Whilst Paul was at Troas, a vision appeared to him in the night. A man of Macedon seemed to stand before him, and say, "Pass over and help us." From this dream or apparition, the apostle inferred that the Lord had called him thither to preach the Gospel; and the result proved that he was not mistaken. The Holy Ghost, which had hitherto checked and diverted their course when proceeding contrary to the line marked out in the divine counsels, now permitted them to pass over, and crowned their efforts with success.

From the words of the sacred narrative, it cannot be certainly determined, whether this were a waking vision or a dream. Supposing it, however, to have been of the latter description, it would be by no means a singular instance of God thus communicating his will to his servants, and even to others. Abraham, Abimelech, Jacob, Joseph, Pharaoh, Solomon, Nebuchadnezzar, are familiar instances<sup>d</sup>. Of these "last days," too, it had been expressly foretold, among the ordinary signs, that men should "see visions and dream dreams<sup>e</sup>."

It is no where suggested, that there was any thing

<sup>c</sup> Acts xvi. 8.

<sup>d</sup> Genesis xv. 12. xx. 3. xxviii. 12—16. xxxvii. 5. and xli. 1. 1 Kings iii. 5. Daniel iv. 5.

<sup>e</sup> Joel ii. 28. quoted and applied by St. Peter in his harangue on the great day of Pentecost. Acts ii. 17.

peculiar in the manner of dreaming on these occasions. Sometimes, too, as in the present instance, they look like the ordinary result of the circumstances under which they are reported to have occurred. If this were a *dream* of St. Paul, (it may be said,) what ground had he and his company to suppose it a divine impulse, and to class it with the light and the voice sent to him when on the road to Damascus, or with the vision of “unutterable things,” which he received in his trance in the temple. Would it not have been more sober and reasonable to conclude, that the approach to the verge of the Asiatic continent, and the sight of that famous strait which formed the slight barrier between them and Europe, had carried Paul’s meditations to the opposite shores? Musing upon those especially who, crossing here with Alexander, made conquest of the east, even of his own Judæa, and established in Egypt a rival to Jerusalem, he could not but expect to retain in his dreams some impression of a train of thought so deeply interesting, tinged, as every dream of his might well be, with the one subject which was predominant in his mind. It must be recollected, however, that the Holy Ghost (by some mode of communication not specified) had of late been making known his approval or disapproval of the several steps of their journey as soon as they were attempted. The absence of this check therefore might have formed an appropriate evidence that the call was divine. Still, as the same solu-

tion will not serve in other cases, it will be more satisfactory to take a general view of the question, extending it not only to all inspired dreams, but to all other modes of divine communication. Let us consider then, first, what those modes were, and then, what evidence the persons addressed had, that the communication in each instance was divine.

I. *Visions*.—By which is meant, any communication conveyed through an object of sight. Of this kind were, the hand-writing on the wall of Belshazzar's banquet room, the pillar of fire and cloud which guided the Israelites through the wilderness, and the like<sup>f</sup>.

II. *Voices*, or revelations conveyed through the sense of hearing. These were the most frequent, and although often accompanied with extraordinary impressions on the other senses, yet were naturally the readiest and most distinct mode of communication. Such was the giving of the Ten Commandments, the call of Moses, and probably all those revelations designated in Genesis by the expression, "The Lord said unto him<sup>g</sup>."

III. *Dreams*.—Under which is included whatever was addressed to the imagination only; whether the abstraction from a consciousness of surrounding objects were the effect of sleep, or of some supernatural influence, as in a trance or *ἔκστασις*. As in-

<sup>f</sup> Daniel v. 5. Exodus xiii. 21, 22.

<sup>g</sup> Exodus iii. 2. xx. 1. Genesis xvii.

stances of this class may be mentioned, St. Paul's revelation in the temple, Peter's vision of the sheet, Jacob's dream, and the like <sup>h</sup>.

IV. *Instinctive impulses*.—This term is used to denote some method of making known the divine will, which does not appear to have been an address either to the senses or to the imagination, but to have operated on the desires, affections, and other inclinations, as those other communications did on the senses or the imagination. Such may we conceive to have been the method whereby Paul and his company are described in this journey as *hindered* by the Holy Ghost from pursuing a wrong course. By this, it may be, they were enabled to interpret Paul's vision of the man of Macedon to be of divine origin <sup>i</sup>. This too might have been what the disciples of our Lord experienced, when walking with him after his resurrection. For, although at the time they failed to attend to it, they afterwards expressed their surprise that they should have been so dull. “Did not *our hearts burn within us* as he talked with us <sup>k</sup>?” Perhaps this mode of revelation being then new to them, was not at once recognized.

These will include all the various revelations of God to man, for there is no other conceivable form,

<sup>h</sup> 2 Cor. xii. 2. Acts x. 10. Genesis xxviii. 12.

<sup>i</sup> Acts xvi. 6, 7, 9. and Rom. i. 13.

<sup>k</sup> Luke xxiv. 32.

except where the mediation of some being is interposed; and *this* belongs to a distinct consideration.

To this general statement, the first remark to be added is, that in all the different methods, the senses and the imagination were probably affected only as in the ordinary course of nature—that the exercise of sight, of hearing, and of fancy, was in every case of the same kind as that produced by natural objects, natural sounds, and natural sleep. Thus Samuel is described as mistaking the voice of God for that of Eli<sup>1</sup>; and another, more experienced, as desiring to be certified by a sign, that the impression was supernatural, and being gratified in his desire as reasonable<sup>m</sup>.

This being so, it follows that besides *the vehicle of communication*, whether voice, vision, or dream, some *sign of confirmation* must always have been provided, in order to satisfy the person visited, that he was not imposed on, or else imposing on himself—imposed on, as in the case of “lying spirits,” or of human contrivances, or of accidental phenomena; imposing on himself, as in the case of enthusiasm. Not that in all, or in most instances any *record* will be found of the sign of confirmation; because the revelation alone concerns those to whom the records of the event are addressed,—the sign, the persons visited. Still it is in many instances mentioned; perhaps in

<sup>1</sup> 1 Sam. iii.

<sup>m</sup> Judges vi. 17.



all, of very great moment. In some indeed it was unavoidable; whenever, namely, the same display served the double purpose of confirming sign and vehicle of communication, as in the case of the hand-writing addressed to Belshazzar<sup>n</sup>. In some cases, again, the two are connected together, so as to form what is called in loose phrase one vision. Of this kind was that which occurred at St. Paul's conversion<sup>o</sup>. The voice alone was the medium of communication; while the light served to certify that it proceeded from no human lips<sup>p</sup>. The same may be observed of the call of Moses at the bush<sup>q</sup>. Sometimes also the two were so joined, as that the sign should not become proof until afterwards; it being in this case a sort of prophetic appendage. Of this kind was Zacharias's revelation respecting John the Baptist, that of Cornelius concerning his own admission into the Church, and the like<sup>r</sup>. The last case is where the two were disjoined; and then the confirmation might be effected in some distinct revelation, or by specific miracle. Thus the budding of Aaron's rod was a sign of confirmation to Aaron, and

<sup>n</sup> Dan. v. 5.

<sup>o</sup> Acts ix. 3—5.

<sup>p</sup> It is often asserted, that St. Paul then saw the Lord. But this could not have been the case. He was immediately struck blind, and the manifestation of Christ, of which he speaks, took place subsequently in the *Temple at Jerusalem*.

<sup>q</sup> Exod. iii. 2, 4.

<sup>r</sup> Luke i. 11. Acts x.

the miracle of the fleece to Gideon<sup>s</sup>. Thus, too, the power of working miracles, granted in all ages to the messengers of God, were signs not only to those to whom they were sent, but to themselves also, that they were really so commissioned<sup>t</sup>. It is probable, that with those who were in the habit of receiving frequent communications, a miracle in every case might not have been requisite; or if any, merely what has been described as an instinctive impulse<sup>u</sup>, such as was supposed to have confirmed St. Paul's view of his vision at Troas. Certain it is, that he is said on that occasion to have acted "*immediately*" on the authority of the vision<sup>x</sup>. The word is introduced, as if for the purpose of marking a case in which no further sign of confirmation was waited for. Perhaps then the vision alone was sufficient for one like St. Paul, thoroughly *accustomed* to the divine communications. For although it is true that this mode of operating on the senses or imagination was apparently the same, as if ordinary and na-

<sup>s</sup> Numb. xvii. 8. Judges vi. 37.

<sup>t</sup> In very arduous and doubtful undertakings, the prophet or messenger was first assured, as in the appointment of Moses. See Exod. iv.

<sup>u</sup> This would seem to be the appropriate one for *correcting* false impressions, and *checking* wrong measures. By this, probably, the apostles were prevented from preaching or writing any thing false.

<sup>x</sup> Acts xvi. 8, 10.

tural causes were operating; still, the eye, the ear<sup>y</sup>, or the mind, would become familiarized to these, as to any other sounds, sights, or even dreams<sup>y</sup>. Thus, when Samuel is represented, (in the instance already noticed,) as ignorant of the nature of the heavenly call, the expression of Scripture is, that "he did not yet know the Lord<sup>z</sup>;" the natural interpretation of which seems to be, that he had not yet become acquainted with the voice by experience. In like manner, Adam is said to have "known" or recognized the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden<sup>a</sup>. Whether, even in these cases, it might have been the duty of the inspired to wait for a confirming sign,—suppose such only as the instinctive impulse or prohibition,—and that for neglecting to do so they might have been sometimes misled, as in the case of Balaam, it is scarcely necessary here to inquire<sup>b</sup>.

This topic has been already more than sufficiently dwelt on for our immediate purpose; and

<sup>y</sup> The experience of many may be appealed to, for the fact, that dreams do recur, and are remembered as repetitions of former dreams. Now, a dream ascertained to be divine, might contain some peculiarities which would, doubtless, be remembered so vividly, as by repetition to stamp a sure character on the class of dreams in which they were recognized.

<sup>z</sup> 1 Sam. iii. 7.

<sup>a</sup> Genesis iii. 8, 10.

<sup>b</sup> Numbers xxii. 20, *et seq.*

yet it leads to a consideration so important to Christian faith, that it is difficult to refrain from pursuing it a little further. Has the reader ever attempted to state to himself distinctly, what he understands by the term revelation, meaning a revelation of the Divine-nature? Neither the voice, the vision, the dream, nor the instinct can be said to be God. All are evidently vehicles, and modes of communicating his messages to man. "Him no man hath seen at any time<sup>c</sup>." Suppose, then, we wished to convey a *description* of an object of sight to one born blind; (for that is our condition in relation to the Divine-nature;) he may perhaps be made to receive some indistinct idea of it through his sense of hearing; and the vehicle of this revelation, as it may be termed, would be a voice. Some contrivance may be afterwards invented which should convey to him the same description, by submitting to his touch figures representing it, or, as is done in some asylums, by letters and words strongly impressed, so as to be distinctly felt. If it had so happened, that he was at length favoured with the gift of sight, (as occurred with some in the miraculous period of the Church,) that same description might be set before his eyes in a painting. Meanwhile, suppose him never yet to have witnessed the object itself, thus variously represented. He would

<sup>c</sup> John i. 18.

then have become acquainted with it in three distinct ways, and have been enabled to improve and to apply his knowledge of it by means of each; still, he would hardly be absurd enough to make either of these assertions,

1. That the sounds, the figures, the writing, or the painting, were the very thing described.

2. That the variety in the mode of conveying the description implied any corresponding distinction in that one object, the idea of which was thus variously communicated to him.

Is the reader sufficiently assured of the truth of these remarks, to apply them to the descriptions man has received of the Divine-nature? God has been *omnipresent*<sup>d</sup> from the beginning, and cannot be supposed at any time to be more in one place

<sup>d</sup> In truth, *omnipresent* is a relative term. God is said to be omnipresent, because all things are *present to him*, not because he is *present to all things*. The original error consists in assigning him *any place at all*,—in attributing *locality* to a Being who cannot be affected, as we are, by *the distinctions of space*. The same may be observed of eternity, as applied to the Divine-nature. We can only judge of time by a *succession of impressions on the mind*; and it is usually by supposing an infinite succession that we arrive at our notion of eternity. But why should we presume to say, that any such *succession* is requisite for the Divine mind? A savage would instruct a traveller in his route, by a *successive* enumeration of point after point, and line after line in his course; a civilized man would do the same *at once*, by placing a map before him. If then human nature exerts itself so differently, as it is cultivated or neglected, how cautious should we be in framing analogies between the energies and capacities of the most perfect mind, and of God who formed it.



than in another. Yet it has pleased Him from time to time to “lift up an ensign,” to which men might come to ask for communication of his will, and to be made sensible of his presence. Such was the Shechinah granted to the Israelites, from between the Cherubim, where God is accordingly said to have *dwelt*<sup>e</sup>. With this flame the voice or other vehicle of communication was so connected, that the priest was obliged to come to the former, in order to avail himself of the latter. The flame was the *sign*; and besides this there was the voice or other channel of revelation. It afterwards pleased the Most High to set up an ensign for all the world to resort unto, even “for the nations afar<sup>f</sup>.” This ensign was, the Human-nature of our blessed Lord. To Him, all were now to come who desired to receive the divine communications. His words and symbolical miracles, and other acts, formed the vehicle of that communication—as much so, and in like manner, as the voice which gave the Ten Commandments from mount Sinai, or which spoke at different times to Adam, to the patriarchs, to the prophets, and others his servants of old. Hence it is written, that “the *Word* was made flesh and dwelt among us,” and that “men beheld his *glory*,” in allusion to the analogy between Him and the Shechinah<sup>g</sup>. Hence, too, the occasional radiant appearances

<sup>e</sup> Exodus xxix. 43.      <sup>f</sup> Isaiah v. 26.

<sup>g</sup> John i. 14.

which could not fail to have suggested to Jewish witnesses the symbol of divine manifestation. At the same time it must be borne in mind, that the incarnation of the Son of God differed from all other modes of divine communication, in that Christ did not only represent, personate, and manifest, God, but man also. Hence he is called the “only mediator<sup>h</sup> ;” and with reference to this peculiarity it is, perhaps, that St. Paul speaking of him says, “now a mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one ;” *i. e.* Christ as mediator is at once the mean of communication from God to man, and from man to God—the representative of both—God in person, and also Man in person; nevertheless, as God, He is one<sup>i</sup>.

But the Almighty has not limited his modes of communication to sensible objects, to voices and visions. He has also addressed himself *immediately* to the mind, to the affections and understandings of men. In this kind of communication effected by the Spirit, the vehicle is not material, nor an object of the senses. Its effects, indeed, have been made visible in the miraculous gifts of the apostles, and in the prophetic monuments of the Church in all ages; its effects we still see in the behaviour of individuals and of nations, and still

<sup>h</sup> Gal. iii. 20. 1 Tim. ii. 5.

<sup>i</sup> The text is a difficult one, and no interpretation given of it is perhaps free from objections; the term Mediator is generally referred to Moses.

hear, in those sounds which are going forth into all lands ; but, according to our Lord's illustration, like the wind, we cannot tell whence it cometh nor whither it goeth.

For us is this mode of divine communication appointed. To us the Spirit speaks, as the man Christ Jesus did to his followers ; as the voice or vision from between the cherubim addressed itself to them of older time ; as, in short, each different organ of communication hath spoken at sundry times to the several generations of God's people ; for He, says the apostle, hath spoken "in divers manners<sup>k</sup>." But then, where are we to seek for the appendage to this, as to the other appointed and regular vehicles of divine communication ? Where, asks the Christian, is our Shechinah ? Where the ensign to which is attached this unheard voice, this unseen vision ? To be sure it may be said, that God is not to be found here or there, but is omnipresent. So He was before the flame of the Shechinah was lighted, or the Word was made flesh ; nor was He less so, during either manifestation. It is not his presence, but the *sign* of his presence we ask for. To the Heathen themselves, from whom the Jewish ensign was removed, He was indeed present,— "not far from any of them," as their apostle told them<sup>l</sup> ; but the great privilege of being a peculiar people consists in having this Sign to resort to.

<sup>k</sup> Heb. i. 1.      <sup>l</sup> Acts xvii. 27.

See then, Christian, whether we have it not as distinct and as accessible, nay, more accessible and more distinct, than ever before was given. Remember, that the mode of communication is no longer by sound or by sight,—no longer a sensible medium, but spirit. The corresponding *ensign*, also, is not addressed to the *eye* nor to the *ear*, but to the *mind*. It is not a flame, which, however brilliant, illumines only the holy of holies. It is not a man, whom only a small portion of the human race can see, and hear, and follow. But it is, what better suits an unlimited dispensation, it is a MIRACULOUS RECORD. The Bible and the Sacraments are our Shechinah, our Sign ; not, indeed, to be recognized as such by gazing at them, lifting them up, and carrying them about, but by humbly reading, marking, learning, and inwardly digesting. We, unlike God's people of old, walk by faith, and not by sight.

It appears then, that besides the occasional communications made by God to his servants and to others, he has, in the course of his ordinary and perpetual dealings with his Church or People, appointed three distinct modes of communication, whereby he was to be accessible to those who should seek him ; and that appended to each was the Sign of his presence in such modes of intercourse. To prevent the error of attributing the divine agency to three different Beings, in consequence of this difference, we are instructed in the Unity of God, and

baptized in his name as the Father, in his name as the Son, and in his name as the Holy Ghost. Again, as under this threefold dispensation we observe that the Almighty has in each manifestation assumed to himself certain characteristics, we presume not to confound God the Father who created us, with God the Son who redeemed us, and with God the Holy Ghost who sanctifies us ; but, agreeably to the sense and language of the Christian Church from the earliest times, we worship Him as one in three Persons.

*St. Paul and the Pythoness<sup>m</sup>.*

The foregoing remarks may serve to guide us in another question, that, namely, concerning the knowledge we possess of the evil Being. With his origin and his absolute nature we are wholly unacquainted. Our view of him, like that of the Author of all good, is chiefly negative. Whence he too is called a spirit; that is, his real nature is incapable of being perceived by our senses ; and even the modes whereby he has been manifested to us are accommodated, not to the sight, the hearing, or to any external perception, but only to the immaterial part of man. But, as God himself has vouchsafed so also to address himself to us, it was necessary, in contradistinction to Him, to designate the author of evil by the term *evil* spirit.

<sup>m</sup> Acts xvi. 16.



According to the Scriptures, he has been to us the author of those two original evils, the effects of which the whole world still daily experiences; sin and death. In perpetuating these, his ordinary and continual agency appears to have been ever exerted; as to counteract the effects of these, has been the objects of God's ordinary dealings with mankind. But the evil spirit has also displayed his *extraordinary* and *occasional* operations on the objects of his malice. He has sometimes vexed men's minds and bodies, as in the instances of Job, of Saul king of Israel, and of those who laboured under that peculiar malady which is called in the Gospels demoniacal possession. On the reality of these possessions some observations were offered, in treating of our Saviour's ministry, under the head of miracles, and under that of the temptation. But besides the infliction of pain and disease, which was there especially noticed, he seems to have exercised a power of delusion,—inspiring agents, over whom he had obtained control, to foretel future events. The most obvious, although by no means the only great mischief produced thereby, was, that to him were ascribed the power and praise which were due only to God. Foreknowledge was considered as a peculiar attribute of the Deity; and the Being therefore who enabled his agents to foretel events, was regarded as the one who ordained and dispensed them. Hence he is called in Scripture “the prince

of this world," and "the father of lies<sup>n</sup>." This by no means implies, that with demoniacal inspiration commenced the various superstitious arts which have obtained in the world, or that they were altogether kept up by this influence. It is more consonant with what is observed of the rest of the evil one's agency, to suppose, that finding these corrupt devices to have sprung out of his original depravation of man's heart, he ever and anon supported them by extraordinary interposition. Why this was ever permitted, the source of goodness being almighty ;—why, indeed, such a Being ever existed, are questions which the inquirer of the present day has learned to consider in their true light as vain, unprofitable, and presumptuous.

During our Saviour's ministry, He often exercised his power over the former class of evil manifestations, namely, demoniacal possessions. Of the latter class none are mentioned, until we find Paul at Philippi exercising a similar authority over the possession of a Pythoness ; a sort of fortune-teller, whose master made a gain of her gift, or rather of her curse ; and who, regarded simply from the account of her way of life, might appear in the light of a common impostor. Her interview with the apostle, however, contains circumstances, which render it unquestionable, that in her case, as in that of the demoniacs, the agency of the devil was manifested.

<sup>n</sup> John viii. 44. xii. 31. xiv. 30.

Philippi was the first place in which Paul, after his departure from Troas, found “a door opened unto him ;” and of the results of his ministry there, this miracle, and the conversion of Lydia a devout Gentile, are the main circumstances recorded. It is worthy of remark, that in this, as in the cases which occurred during the Saviour’s personal ministry, the evil spirit acknowledged in Christ the agency of the most high God. It was through *his* name still that these miracles were performed. Agreeably to the account which his commissioned servants gave him, whilst he was yet with them, “In thy name we cast out devils°,” Paul now addressed the spirit of divination, and found it, as Christ had foretold, obedient unto him.

The believer hopes and expects to find a beautiful propriety in every part of the Christian scheme ; and where he does not perceive it, still he infers its existence. Thus, observing that of the two kinds of demoniacal possession our Saviour frequently exercised his power in person over those afflicted with the malady so characterized, while the exercise of a similar power over those visited by a spirit of divination was reserved for his apostle to the Gentiles ; one is naturally prompted to look for some mark of propriety and consistency in the arrangement. Such may, perhaps, be found by contemplating the difference of character in the ministry

of Christ, and of his apostles guided by his Spirit. It was the business of the former to *do the work* of redemption, of the latter *to instruct men in it*. The ministry of Christ, therefore, would be directed generally against all the evil and hurtful agency of the Devil; the ministry of the apostles more particularly against the propagation of falsehood. The former would naturally counteract the *works* of Satan; the latter his *words*, as conveyed through agents, such as was the rescued Pythoness.

It was during the apostle's third journey, however, that his success in this branch of his ministry appears to have been greatest. At Ephesus, among the eminent miracles (Δυνάμεις οὐ τὰς τυχοῦσας) which he displayed, some appear to have been of this character<sup>p</sup>; and to have operated so powerfully on the minds of many who witnessed them, that they came forward and burned publicly their books of magic. The high valuation of these, marks at once the extent of the evil, and also the wonderful success of the apostle. This whole portion of his ministry proves too, that demoniacal possession was not, as some have rashly imagined, confined to the Jews.

<sup>p</sup> The attempt of the Jewish exorcists to imitate Paul, proves that these cures were wrought, like that of the Pythoness, "in the name of the Lord Jesus." "Then certain vagabond Jews, exorcists, took upon them to call over them that had evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, We adjure thee by Jesus, whom Paul preacheth." (Acts xix. 13.)

*St. Paul at Athens<sup>9</sup>.*

The apostle and his company, when dismissed by the magistrates from Philippi, passed through Amphipolis, Apollonia, Thessalonica, and Beræa; and in each left traces of their inspired agency. At Thessalonica, as we know from the Epistle soon after addressed to the converts there, their labours were remarkably successful, even among the idolaters. Athens is next in the list of places which received thus early a summons from the Holy Spirit to repent, believe, and be baptized. Athens was still the principal seat, of learning, and of those arts which furnished the chief attraction of idolatry. It was the University of the Roman empire and of the world. At Athens therefore it might be expected, that argument, not force, would be opposed to the efforts of the Christian orator; and that on his part, as dealing with a people accessible in a high degree through their reasoning powers, the *words* more than the *works* of the Spirit would be employed. It is not, however, merely to point out the propriety of the Holy Spirit's ministry there—although, like every other instance, it affords a strong presumption of the truth of the Bible narrative, and ought not to be overlooked—but it is not merely on this account, nor yet for the sake of that interest which

<sup>9</sup> Acts xvii.



the name of Athens inspires, that Paul's arrival there is noticed; but on account of two circumstances which occurred while he was there, and which, admitting each of different views, may not be regarded at first by all in that which seems to be the correct one.

Preaching, in the first instance, (as his custom was,) to the Jews and devout Gentiles of the place, his discourses were so much noised abroad, as to attract the attention, not of the magistracy, but of the philosophical idlers. Idlers, I say, because at Athens these speculators formed a body of literary loungers, and presented in the porches and other places of public resort a whimsical scene of fashionable relaxation, of which the amusements and conceits were metaphysical and moral discussions. Surrounded by company like this, and possibly unable, from the variety and number of the questions addressed to him, to make his meaning understood, Paul was conducted—not as a criminal, for of this there is no intimation—but as the promulgator of a new system, to *Mars' Hill*, and was there desired publicly to explain his views. His speech, accordingly, bears no marks of a *defence*, nor was it followed up either by acquittal or condemnation,—by sentence from a Court, or violence from the multitude. At his mention of a resurrection from the dead, the doctrine seems to have struck his audience as so monstrous and preposterous, that he could no longer proceed for

the jests and witticisms which it occasioned. His speech is doubtless, therefore, only a part of what he intended to say to them, and what might thus have proved more generally effectual, had his auditors "had ears to hear" him out<sup>r</sup>. As St. Paul's examination has been most commonly represented in the light of a judicial proceeding, these remarks will not be useless, if, by determining more precisely the circumstances, they shall make his celebrated harangue appear more natural, and more fully adapted to the occasion. One consideration too should be borne in mind, that at Athens, the chief, if not the only, persuasive which he chose to employ was eloquence—the very weapon in the use of which the Athenians were most skilful. With *miracles* he had confounded the people whose boast was "an image that fell from heaven," and he now *pleads* for Christianity in the city of Demosthenes.

In the speech itself there is only one topic which will be noticed; it is the allusion to an altar erected to "the unknown God."

Some few, who have considered St. Paul's behaviour here as an eminent illustration of the character which he has given to himself, of being "all

<sup>r</sup> "Some mocked, and others said, *We will hear thee again of this matter.*" This may be understood to imply a division of sentiment among the auditory; some mocking him, so as to render it impossible for him to proceed; others, as Dionysius and Damaris, encouraging him, and telling him that *they at least would continue to hear him.*

things to all men," have so far departed from the common acceptation of the passage, as to imagine that "the unknown God" was no one particular object of worship which the Athenians had adopted; but the true God, whom, he tells them, they *ignorantly* worshipped in the various characters of Jupiter, Apollo, &c. To Jehovah (they understood him to say) are justly due your worship and your altars. It is not your Jupiter who is the God, but the Being who made the Heavens or Jupiter<sup>t</sup>.

The objections to this interpretation are these: first, the apostle so expresses himself as clearly to denote that the words, "to God unknown," were inscribed on some altar<sup>t</sup>; secondly, respectable testimonies have been found of the existence of such an altar; lastly, it is not in accordance with St. Paul's other addresses on the subject of idolatry, —his custom being to point out to the heathen, not that they were worshipping God under false names, but serving the devil<sup>u</sup>.

It remains, therefore, to determine what particular God was meant by the inscription on the

<sup>t</sup> Pope's creed, as expressed in his universal prayer, was no other than this:

Father of all, in every age,  
In every clime, ador'd;  
By saint, by savage, and by sage,  
Jehovah, Jove, and Lord.

<sup>t</sup> Βαμὸν ἐν ᾧ ἐπιγράφετο Ἀγνώστῳ Θεῷ.

<sup>u</sup> 1 Cor. x. 20. 1 Tim. iv. 1.

altar. On this point the remarks already made, on the occasion of the speech, may not a little help to guide inquiry. Nothing is more probable, than that the Athenians, the most inquisitive people on earth, should by this time have heard, and have taken some interest in the report, of a new God which the Christians were represented as proclaiming to the world<sup>x</sup>. In their characteristic vivacity and eagerness for novelty, an altar might have been erected to him, before they had ascertained his name. On Paul's arrival, their very conversation with him would lead them to surmise that he was

<sup>x</sup> *Christo ut Deo carmen dicunt*, Plinii Epist. May not the remark, that Paul was a setter forth of strange gods, because he preached *Jesus and the Resurrection*, have arisen from his statement of the doctrine of the Trinity, in reply to some question put to him concerning the new God? The opening of his speech obviously falls in with this view. Having first declared Him to be the same God who made the world, he was proceeding to speak of his manifestation in the flesh, viz. "the man whom he had ordained," when he was interrupted. Nor is this altogether unfounded conjecture. For, that Christ was represented as a strange God, worshipped by the Christians, is, I think, plain from the very terms in which Pliny describes the new sect. "They sing a hymn to Christ as to a God," which is precisely the remark of the Athenians respecting Paul, that he was "a setter forth of strange gods."

This then is at least plausible, whether we admit or reject the notion that the accomplished Christian orator was so misunderstood in the use of the term *ἀνάστασις*, (resurrection,) by an Athenian audience, as to leave the impression that he was discoursing of a goddess so named—a notion first suggested by Chrysostom, and adopted by many after him.

one of the promulgators of this new religion. Hence the eagerness with which he was brought before the public, led purposely perhaps by this very altar, which would on that account be pointed out to him, and would form a natural topic for the opening of his speech.

It is scarcely necessary to add to these remarks, that the expression<sup>y</sup> “too superstitious,” which is mistranslated, was meant, no doubt, as a compliment, and not as a reproach, by characterizing the people as one who displayed a high sense of religion.

*St. Paul at Corinth and Cenchrea<sup>z</sup>.*

At Corinth the apostle made a longer sojourn than in any other city during his journey. Here were written his Epistles to the Thessalonians; perhaps that also to the Galatians. Here, too, he probably received from Aquila and Priscilla the first intelligence of Christianity having been preached to the Romans. Here, lastly, he founded that Church, which, above all others, engaged his chief personal interest. In the minute internal regulations of this, more than of any other, he appears to have busied himself; and, accordingly, his Epistles to the Corin-

<sup>y</sup> *δυσδαίμονιστος*.

<sup>z</sup> Acts xviii.



thians contain more information on the Church discipline of the apostolic age, than any other part of the New Testament. Indeed, in some few instances, the points alluded to have so much the character of domestic detail, as scarcely to admit of illustration from the general history of the times.

Corinth may be considered as the boundary of this apostolical journey, and the last regular scene of Paul's labours for the present. For, although we hear of him afterwards at Cenchrea, and again at Ephesus, his pause at the former place was only to perform a ceremony which he went through as a Jewish Christian; at the latter, to convey to the Asiatic continent Aquila and Priscilla. Cenchrea has, however, been particularized, together with Corinth, in order to remind the reader that St. Paul here exhibited a striking illustration of the general principle which guided the primitive Church, in regard to the observance of foreign rites and rules by its members. As a member of the Jewish society, about to visit his own people, and not as a Christian, or as performing any duty to God, St. Paul on this occasion observed a form wholly Jewish. On the same principle he anxiously hastened to be present at Jerusalem by the approaching festival, whilst he was insisting on the sinfulness of the Gentile convert, who should add to the Christian appointments the obligations of the Jewish law. Thus, too, he circumcised Timothy, because his father was a Jew; but, although he was

in the very seat and centre of Jewish prejudice, in Jerusalem, and even while the question was hotly agitated, he refused to allow Titus, the Gentile convert, to be circumcised.

# (11) THE HISTORY OF THE

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## CHAP. VI.

### ST. PAUL'S THIRD APOSTOLICAL JOURNEY.

From A. D. 55—60.

#### ROUTE.

Galatia; Phrygia; Ephesus; Asia; Ephesus again; Troas; Macedonia; Greece; Corinth; Macedonia again; Philippi; Troas again; Assos; Mytilene; Chios; Samos; Trogyllium; Miletus, (in Asia;) Coos; Rhodes; Patara, (in Lycia;) Tyre; Ptolemais; Cæsarea; Jerusalem<sup>a</sup>.

OF those places through which the route of the apostle in his third official journey is marked, Ephesus was the principal scene of his labours. In his return from Greece to Palestine, he had touched at Ephesus, and there left Aquila and Priscilla, with a promise that he would himself soon visit them. This promise he now fulfilled. Passing through Galatia and Phrygia, he made Ephesus, for the third time, his chief station in Asia, as on former occasions he had chosen Corinth in Greece. It was here then that all who dwelt in Asia, both Jews and Greeks, first heard the word from him. Among these may be numbered Epaphras, who not only became his convert, but probably his missionary to

<sup>a</sup> Acts xviii. 23. xix. to xxi. 15.

the neighbouring Colossians <sup>b</sup>. Of all the incidents, however, which mark Paul's residence at Ephesus, the most interesting, perhaps, is his meeting with certain disciples of John the Baptist.

*St. Paul and the disciples of John the Baptist.*

No mention is made by any of the Evangelists of the disciples of John the Baptist, subsequently to their master's imprisonment and death. Probably the greater part of them became followers of Jesus; having been indeed called and instructed by John to this very end. Some notice of this transfer might have been intended in the formal embassy on which he sent them to our Saviour, when he found his own removal from them likely to be at hand<sup>c</sup>. But before it actually took place, some might have quitted Palestine; and thus, although convinced by the preaching of Christ's forerunner, might have had no opportunity of attaching themselves either to Him or to the disciples of Him whose way their master had prepared. Such might have been the case with these, who, about twelve in number, were found by Paul at Ephesus. Apollos, one similarly circumstanced, had, before the apostle's arrival, received baptism from Aquila and Priscilla; and had already, from his eloquence and knowledge of the Scriptures, become eminently serviceable to the

<sup>b</sup> Colossians i. 7.

<sup>c</sup> Matt. xi. 2. See Appendix, [I.]



Christian cause in Achaia<sup>d</sup>. As Apollos is said to have been of Alexandria, these others also might have come from the same place. Even so, their total ignorance of all that had occurred at Jerusalem during an interval of more than twenty years, on a subject which so nearly concerned them as the descent of the Holy Ghost, and the preaching and baptizing of the apostles<sup>e</sup>; and this, too, notwithstanding their manifest expectation of the events, strongly confirms the remark formerly made, on the extreme tardiness with which intelligence of the several stages of the new dispensation was communicated; even between places the most connected by frequent intercourse. Between Alexandria and Jerusalem there was at this time nearly as much intercourse, as between the holy city and the remote parts of Judea itself; and the Passover, at least, was yearly attended by numbers, with, perhaps, a more scrupulous punctuality than by the Jews who were resident in their native country.

The rebaptism of these disciples of John the Baptist, first by Aquila and Priscilla, and, in a second instance, by St. Paul, suggests an inquiry into the difference between the baptism of John and that of Paul; which again leads us to ask, what was the difference between this last and that of Jesus Christ himself.

<sup>d</sup> Acts xviii. 24. <sup>e</sup> Acts xix. 2.

John baptized with water *only*; that is, there was no inward grace bestowed on the disciple through the ceremony. Baptism was only a sign of admission into the temporary society over which he presided; and as such, a pledge also that the initiated would conform to the rule of that society, repentance.

But, while John baptized, he pointed to the coming of Jesus, as of one who should “baptize with the Holy Ghost and with fire;” meaning, that his *baptism* should be performed, with water indeed, but not with water *only*—that the *immersion* and *sprinkling* should not be merely the sign of admission into a society, or the pledge of conformity with rules, but the appointed means for imparting the Holy Spirit. It was really then a baptizing with the Holy Ghost, rather than with water; for the same reason as we should say, that he who was sent by the prophet to wash in Jordan was cured, not by the washing, but by the secret grace attached to it; or, again, that it was not the clay on the blind man’s eyes which restored him to sight, but the virtue which went forth from Jesus with the act of putting it on.

“With the Holy Ghost,” says St. John, therefore, “He shall baptize, and with fire<sup>b</sup>,” that is, with the Holy Ghost, whose emblem and attesting

<sup>b</sup> Matt. iii. 11. Mark i. 8. Luke iii. 16. John i. 33.

sign shall be fire. He speaks of the flame which descended on the day of Pentecost, in proof of the true invisible descent of the Holy Ghost.

Such then was the baptism of Jesus, as distinguished from that of John. Jesus himself indeed baptized not, but such was the baptism of his followers. At the same time, an evident distinction obtains between this rite as performed by his disciples during his abode on earth, and as performed by those who after the day of Pentecost were enabled to fulfil his commission of baptizing, not only in the name of the Father and of the Son, but also of the Holy Ghost. It was, doubtless, owing to this very ground of difference, that they were forbidden to enter upon their duties until the descent of the Holy Ghost had taken place. For, until that event, they could neither impart that holy gift to the initiated, nor have properly baptized them into that name. It is plain, for the same reason, that whatever baptisms took place during our Saviour's ministry must have been similarly defective. And yet it would seem, that to that stage of Christian baptism more especially John's words relate, "*He shall baptize you*<sup>1</sup>," &c. And, doubtless, they are to be so understood. The baptism of Jesus, during his abode on earth, was defective; no more internal grace was conveyed at the time through it than through John's. But this was in conformity with

<sup>1</sup> Luke iii. 16. John i. 33.

the character of Christ's whole ministry. It was imperfect *for the time*, but so framed as to become perfect afterwards. Those whom he baptized by the hands of his apostles and of the seventy were in one sense incompletely baptized; because the most important effects of the ceremony did not in these instances immediately follow the performance of it. Still, when he sent the Holy Spirit on them, he may be said to have himself completed their baptism; which was thus more honourable than any others could boast of receiving. With them the giving of the Holy Ghost was not by the agency of human ministers, but immediately by their Lord and their God. Being baptized too by a manifestation of the Holy Ghost, these had no more need to be rebaptized unto that name, in addition to the form wherewith they had already been admitted as disciples, than had the apostles to be baptized unto Christ, when called by him in person. The presence of the divine Being in each manifestation, superseded and implied all that could be intended by specific baptism unto that name, which, in each case, designated the Person of the Godhead then present. None of Christ's disciples accordingly were rebaptized after the descent of the Holy Ghost<sup>k</sup>; but with John's, the case was widely different. On

<sup>k</sup> Tertullian mentions certain freethinkers of his day, who argued from this fact, that either Christian baptism was not necessary to salvation, or else the apostles were not saved. *De Baptismo*, c. 12.

the present occasion it is particularly recorded, that Paul explained to them the difference, baptized them in the Christian form, and imparted to them the Holy Ghost, testified by the gift of tongues and of prophecy.

*Collections for the poor of Judæa<sup>1</sup>.*

So repeated mention is made in the Epistles of St. Paul, of contributions for the relief of the Christians of Judæa, that it may be useful to notice this subject also in connection with the apostle's stay at Ephesus. Whilst he was preparing to make excursions alone into the other parts of Asia, for the purpose of converting or confirming converts in the faith, Timothy and Erastus were despatched to Macedonia, to urge the claims of the necessitous brethren, and to hasten the contributions, so that he might find them ready on his arrival there. It may be necessary to remind the reader, who inquires why the Christians of Judæa especially should need this assistance, that, according to the prediction of the prophets at Antioch, they had been distressed by a general scarcity of provisions, and that this was only a continuance of those charitable efforts, of which Antioch had set the example. It will be observed, however, that St. Paul advocates the cause of these his distressed brethren, not on the principle of mere benevolence, but as a *peculiar*

<sup>1</sup> Acts xviii. 22, compared with 1 Cor. xvi.



*Christian duty.* With a view then of elucidating this principle, and thereby explaining the true character of the numerous passages which refer to it, the subject has been noticed.

Our Lord had, with peculiar emphasis, told his disciples, that he gave them one new commandment, which was to love one another. This was the first precept which was given to them as a separate society. That it had reference only to their disposition and behaviour towards each other as members of such a Body, is evident. Else, the commandment could not be called new ; inasmuch as his frequent injunctions to humility, and forgiveness of injuries, had much better title to this peculiar and emphatic appellation. So considered, the commandment was altogether new, because the object was new, the circumstances out of which the obligation arose were new. Of its solemn importance, and of its further enforcement by the Holy Spirit, under the expressions of “unity” and “unity of the Spirit,” it is at present unnecessary to speak. Enough has been said to render the principle easily applicable, and, in the present instance especially, to mark its connection with St. Paul’s earnestness, in urging the contribution on the brethren of every place as a *peculiar Christian duty*.

This, then, was the first occasion which was afforded to the whole Church of manifesting their social love,—of evidencing the unity of the Spirit ; and as such we must consider the apostle to be

representing it. In order to be satisfied of this, we need only refer to one or two of the apostle's injunctions, and either place them side by side with our Saviour's commandment, or consider them alone. Thus, the Lord had said, "A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another. As I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another<sup>1</sup>." The apostle in speaking of the contribution calls it "*the experiment*," or "test," by means of which they glorify God for their professed subjection to the Gospel of Christ<sup>m</sup>. To the Galatians before this, he had expressly sent a charge to "do good unto all men, especially unto them who were of the household of faith<sup>n</sup>." Those words of another apostle too, "whoso hath this world's good and seeth *his brother* (τὸν ἀδελφὸν, not πλησίον) have need; and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how *dwelleth the love of God in him*<sup>o</sup>?" seem cast, as it were, in the mould of the original commandment, "as I have loved you, that ye also love one another<sup>p</sup>;" and scarcely requires, that the writer should inform us, as he has done, that it is to that commandment he is alluding.

<sup>1</sup> John xiii. 34, 35.<sup>m</sup> 2 Corinth. ix. 13.<sup>n</sup> Gal. vi. 10.<sup>o</sup> 1 John iii. 17.<sup>p</sup> John xiii. 34.

*St. Paul and the Corinthians*<sup>1</sup>.

Before we accompany the apostle to another stage of his journey, I would advert once more to his connection with the Church of Corinth. The occasion is not unsuitable, because from Ephesus was written his first Epistle to the Corinthians, the design of which in part has been already noticed. His second followed after no very long interval.

It would of course be incompatible with the scale of this inquiry, to discuss generally the matter and character of these Epistles. Mention has been made of them with no further view, than to remind the reader of the tone of authority which the apostle assumes in them, over the offending members of the Church to which they are addressed; and this, not as vested in him alone, but as exercised by the governors of that Church'. There, indeed, it would seem to have been properly lodged; for he would willingly, as he writes, have spared himself the task of interposing his extraordinary right as apostle, in order to enforce a discipline which of themselves they were competent to preserve, and which, as the event shews, they did maintain without his further interference.

About the same time also, (as may be inferred from his first Epistle to Timothy,) Alexander and

<sup>1</sup> Acts xviii.<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. v. and 2 Cor. ii.

Hymenæus were made examples to the Church, of the right vested in its governors of punishing its members. Some few remarks on the nature and origin of this right, therefore, may not be inappropriate here. As, in each instance, the sentence is styled "a delivery of the person unto Satan<sup>1</sup>," the true import of that expression also should be determined.

That no society can exist without some rules, and without some means of enforcing obedience to those rules, is obvious. When therefore it is asked, whether Christ or the Holy Spirit left any ecclesiastical laws, or vested any where power to enforce those laws? if the question is put with a view to ascertain whether Church government be of divine origin, it is idle; inasmuch as the very institution of the ecclesiastical society, the Church, implies the design that rules should be established, and means provided to enforce them.

But another object may be intended by the question. It may be put with the view of ascertaining what those rules are, whereby this society, the Church, is designed to be governed. For, it may be said, and plausibly enough, that granting the intention of the Church's founder to have laws established, to be ever so apparent, how are we to know *what kind of government* he intended?

On one point the inquirer must satisfy himself.

<sup>1</sup> 1 Tim. i. 20.

If, from the nature of the Church, and from existing circumstances, the members were already possessed of the means of acquiring this knowledge, in that case neither Christ nor the Holy Spirit would be likely to leave any code of ecclesiastical laws; on precisely the same principle, as no code of ethics was left.

Now, is there any thing in the nature of the Church to guide us, as to what are ecclesiastical offences? Undoubtedly there is. In every society there must be such a principle; and by reference to it in each, are formed laws for the government of each. Every society recognizes peculiar offences, arising out of, and depending solely on, the peculiar nature of the society; so that in proportion as this latter is understood, the former are defined. Much mischievous confusion in some instances arises from a want of attention to this connection; and the attention is frequently diverted from it by the accidental circumstance, that the same act often becomes an offence against many societies. Thus, theft is at once an offence against the supreme Ruler of the universe,—against the political body to which the thief is attached,—against some certain class of society, perhaps, in which he moves, and so on. The act being one, it is only by reflection that we are enabled to separate the different views which render it in each case an offence, and in each of a different magnitude. Again, what becomes a crime because violating the principle of one society, may



be none in another ; if, namely, it does not interfere with the object proposed in the formation and preservation of that other society. Thus, the violation of the academical rules of our Universities does not render the offending member amenable to the laws of the land. Thus, too, the very conduct which recommends a smuggler or a robber to his confederacy, becomes an offence against the political body with which he is associated.

In order, therefore, to ascertain what are inherent offences or crimes in any society, it is necessary that we should know with what object or objects such society is formed. If information of this kind then be found in the sacred record, respecting the Christian society, ecclesiastical law by revelation was no more to be expected, than a code of ethics to tell men what their own consciences were already constituted by God to declare.

It is certain, however, that if the question need not be answered in the affirmative, in order either to establish the divine origin of ecclesiastical government, or to determine what offences come under its cognizance, there is yet a third object which may be proposed in urging it. What *punishments* are authorized, in order to check those offences ? Ought not these to have been specified ? and, not having been specified, does the nature of the case here also supersede the necessity of a revelation, and enable us to know what coercion is, and what is not, agreeable to the Divine will ? The in-

quiry, too, seems to be the more reasonable, because in looking to the methods by which various societies are upheld, we find the punishment even in similar societies by no means the same. Military discipline, for instance, in different countries, and at different periods, has been enforced by penalties unlike in degree and in kind. In different countries and ages, the social tie between the master and the slave has been differently maintained. All this is true, but still, in looking at the question so, we take only a partial view, and lose one important feature in the establishment of coercion,—the right.

Now, this right is either inherent in the society, or conventional, or both, as is the case in most confederate bodies. When the right is limited to what the society exercises as inherent and indispensable,—inherent in its nature, and indispensable to its existence,—the extreme punishment is, *exclusion*; and the various degrees and modifications of punishment, are only degrees and modifications of exclusion. When the right is conventional also, (as far as it is so,) the punishment is determined by arbitrary enactment, proceeding from some authority acknowledged by all parties, (whether that authority be lodged in the parties themselves, or in competent representatives, or in other delegated persons,) and therefore styled conventional. Few societies have ever existed without a large portion of these latter. Hence the anomaly above alluded to, and hence too the vulgar impression,

that all punishments are arbitrary, and depend solely on the caprice and judgment of the government. What is popularly and emphatically termed *society*, affords a good instance of the first; that is, of a social union regulated and maintained only by a right inherent. In this, excessive ill-manners and the gross display of ungentlemanly feelings are punished by absolute exclusion. According as the offence is less, the party offending is for a time excluded from some select *portion* of good society, or from certain meetings and the like, in which more particularly the spirit and genuine character of gentility are to be cherished. All its lawful and appropriate punishments are a system of exclusion, in various shapes and degrees.

Now it is obvious, that no *authority* is ever here appealed to in any case; because the right arises out of, and is inseparable from the society that exercises it,—is implied in the very existence of the society. In like manner, when the Christian searches the New Testament for positive enactments against offences to which the Church may be exposed, and finds none, it cannot nevertheless be said, that the omission leaves the nature of the punishment arbitrary or conventional. It obviously sanctions those which are coexistent with the Church, and which must therefore claim the same origin and foundation as the Church itself. It does more, *it sanctions these exclusively.*

In applying these principles to the government

of the Church, it is not intended to represent the subject as left wholly to be gathered from the nature of the Christian society, or as if no reference were found in the New Testament to particular points of ecclesiastical government. Not only does the case selected for consideration prove that it is otherwise, but many expressions and passages may be cited from other parts of Scripture, of similar import. All that is here asserted is, that these are only illustrations of, and allusions to, the principles of ecclesiastical society; which principles, thus exemplified and illustrated, are sufficient to direct us in all cases. So, (to allude once more to the analogous case of the Christian code of morals,) rules may be found without number in the sacred volume, but they are employed only in *illustration* of the great Christian principles, which, thus acknowledged and sanctioned, were to be our guide.

In determining the true nature and object of the Church or Christian society, no small assistance is derived from the emblematical character of its special type, the Jewish temple. It was formed for the residence of the Holy Spirit, to be the medium of its operations. Look through the Scriptural marks attached to it, and this truth every where meets the eye. It may be recognized in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper<sup>t</sup>; and in those

<sup>t</sup> "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have *no life in you*." John vi. 53.

many mysterious allusions which lie scattered throughout the record of our blessed Lord's words, especially in the Gospel of St. John. His writings are indeed inexplicable, unless we assign such a meaning, not to a few remarkable passages, but to a train of recurring allusions to this abode of God amongst his people; allusions in this apostle's case perhaps the more frequent, because naturally suggested by the recollection of those holy moments, when he used to lean on the bosom of his Master. What other view will sufficiently explain the mysterious expressions of that prayer, which the Saviour offered up for his future Church, on his approaching separation from those who were to be the founders of it. "Neither for these alone, (prayed he,) but for them also which shall believe on me through their word. That they all may be one; *as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us*." And again, "the glory which thou gavest me, I have given them";

<sup>u</sup> John xvii. 20, *et seq.*

<sup>\*</sup> Alluding to his promise of the Comforter, that gift for which He was to ascend on high in order that He might give it to man, and for which it was expedient that He should go away.

This *glory* is attributed to whatever, from time to time, was the appointed residence of the Godhead. As this residence was chiefly manifested by the symbol of light, the word *glory* expressed the light also.

When Moses desired to have a manifestation of the Lord, his request was, "I beseech thee, shew me thy glory," (Exod. xxxiii. 18.) In like manner, it is said that "the glory of the



that they may be one even as we are one; *I in them, and thou in me*, that they may be made

Lord filled the tabernacle," (Exod. xl. 34.) and "the house of the Lord," meaning the light from the cherubim.

Accordingly, when Isaiah prophesied of the manifestation of God in Christ, he says, "*the glory of the Lord shall be revealed*," (Isaiah xl. 5.) And St. John, alluding to the prophet's vision, "these things spake Esaias, when he saw his *glory*," (John xii. 41.) and again, "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt (or tabernacled) amongst us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father," John i. 14.

So, too, when Christ speaks of his Church, as the future residence of the Godhead in the person of the Holy Spirit, he expresses himself in allusions to this symbol; although that symbol was no longer to be given to a people destined to "walk by faith, and not *by sight*." His apostles continued to adopt the same language concerning the Church. St. Peter writes, "The Spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you," (1 Pet. iv. 14.) St. Paul speaks of "Christ's glorious Church;" and, in his comparison between the Mosaic and Christian dispensation, the Divine presence in each is expressed in the same figurative language. "If the ministration of death written and engraven on stones was *glorious*, so that the children of Israel could not stedfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance; which glory was to be done away: how shall not the ministration of the Spirit be rather *glorious*?" And, so continuing and explaining the image, he at length proceeds to say that we, the Church of Christ, are not only, as were the Jews, *spectators of the glory*, but its abode and resting place, as it were. "But we *all* with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are *changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord*." (2 Corinthians iii. 7—18.)

The latter part of this sentence, in the original, is ἀπὸ δόξης εἰς δόξαν, καθάπερ ἀπὸ Κυρίου πνύματος, of which the former words are, as Macknight observes, "an Hebraism denoting a continued succession and increase of glory," see Psalm lxxxiv. 7. the latter an expression shaped obviously in conformity with this Hebraism,

perfect in one ; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.” “ If a man love me, he will keep my words ; and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, *and make our abode with him*.”

Here, then, is the principle by which all ecclesiastical discipline, by whomsoever exercised, must be regulated. To this, accordingly, St. Paul especially refers, when pointing out to the Corinthians, that what had occurred amongst them came under the head of ecclesiastical offences, and as such ought to be punished by the rulers of the Church, “ Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you ? ” “ If any man destroy (or defile<sup>c</sup>) the temple of God, him shall God destroy, for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are<sup>a</sup>. ”

All ecclesiastical offences, then, become such on the principle, that they are inconsistent with the *residence* of the Holy Spirit in the Church, or with his *operations*<sup>b</sup>. By this, the apostles were regu-

of which it is an appendage and explanation ; it was used to denote that he was not speaking of any *visible glory*, but of the divine Spirit himself, of whose indwelling it had been the ancient symbol.

<sup>a</sup> John xiv. 23.

<sup>c</sup> φθίγει.

<sup>b</sup> 1 Corinth. iii. 16, 17.

<sup>b</sup> Hence our Lord's words, “ He that speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him ; but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, *neither in*

lated; much more, then, their successors. Ananias's visitation was the first instance of the infliction of ecclesiastical punishment, and it is expressly said to have been for an offence against the Holy Ghost. Certainly, to determine what behaviour constitutes an offence of this kind, supposes a knowledge of what is inconsistent with the abode of the Holy Spirit in the Church, and also what his operations are; and these are matters of revelation,—seen, doubtless, with more or less clearness, (as all other matters of instruction are,) in proportion as men exert their faculties to understand, and God sees good to bless that exertion.

Thus much may be sufficient, on the nature of offences against the Church, for the reader to understand the principle which renders them such; and it now remains to inquire, what are the proper penalties?

The same method will be adopted as in the former case, *viz.* first, to consider what practices would naturally result from the principles laid down; and then, to see whether the sacred writings con-  
*this world, nor in the world to come;*" that is, he shall be amenable to the Church as a criminal, as well as to God as a sinner. The assertion is a plain disavowal on the part of Christ, of his being the *ruler of the Church*. The whole passage may be referred to, as deserving the most attentive consideration. Our Lord's remark had been, that his casting out devils by the Spirit of God was a sign that the kingdom of God was coming on them unawares. In this kingdom, the Holy Ghost, the Comforter, was ruler and governor, and consequently blasphemy against the Holy Ghost was treason.

tain or allude to such a system of coercion, as we may have been thus led to infer. It was observed then, that *the inherent right* of every society is exclusion in its various gradations: that every society must possess this, but nothing beyond this, as an inherent right. Whatever other punishments are adopted by any society, must be founded on a right created by the permission of its members, if its formation was a matter of choice to them, or by the compelling person, if it was a matter of compulsion. Now, apply this to the case of the Church. There is a society left by its founder without any penal code; and the question is, whether any right of punishment therefore is vested in it, and of what punishment? Exclusion, or excommunication, in all its shades and degrees, presents itself as a kind of penalty, the infliction of which is an inherent and perpetual right. Referring to the pages of apostolical history, we see every reason to conclude from the incidental allusions to ecclesiastical discipline, that such was the mode of coercion sanctioned by the infallible guides and founders of the Church. Our Saviour's direction had been, "If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone; if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the Church;

but if he neglect to hear the Church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican<sup>b</sup>." To the Corinthian Church the apostle's rebuke simply is, "Ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned that he that hath done this deed *might be taken away from among you*<sup>c</sup>." And a little after, he adds, in explanation of certain figurative expressions with which he had been illustrating the same principle, "I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat<sup>d</sup>."

In the energetic language of the apostle on this occasion occurs the expression, "to deliver over the person to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord

<sup>b</sup> Matt. xviii. 15—17.

<sup>c</sup> 1 Corinth. v. 2, 11.

<sup>d</sup> This was an allusion to the *Agapæ*, or love-feasts, which formed the least important act of Christian communion. It is unreasonable to interpret it of *all intercourse* with the offending brother; which was a prohibition as much beyond the boundary of Church discipline, as it was inconsistent with the apostle's remark on another occasion, that if a Christian were perversely and superstitiously to abstain from commerce with all but the faithful, he must go out of the world. It was of St. Peter's withdrawing himself from this *test* of communion with the Gentile converts, that St. Paul chiefly complained in the memorable struggle for Christian equality at Antioch, "For before that certain came from James, he did *eat with the Gentiles*." Galatians ii. 12.



Jesus<sup>e</sup>." In this, then, there would seem to be something more implied than mere excommunication. It is spoken of, too, as a sentence proceeding by peculiar right from himself, and not, as the other, from one vested in the Church as a body. Whether in the present instance it was executed, or only threatened, is not explicitly stated; that it was actually inflicted on Hymenæus and Alexander, and by St. Paul, is proved by his Epistle to Timothy<sup>f</sup>.

Here, then, the inquiry concerning the right of punishment takes apparently a new turn. The inquirer having satisfied himself that the Church has the right of exclusion, as well from its nature, as from the allusions to the exercise of such a right in the apostolical writings, perceives, in the course of his search, instances of punishment which seem to wear a different character, and looks for some different principle to which he may refer them. He recollects, that not only those above mentioned were delivered over to Satan by St. Paul, but, what is more unequivocally expressed, and more awful in its character, that Ananias, the first offender against the Church, was visited with death. And that there may be no misapprehension as to the nature of his crime, it is called an offence against the Holy Ghost—against Him whose temple we are, as a Church. From the savage and unholy practices

\* 1 Corinth. v. 5.      <sup>f</sup> 1 Tim. i. 20.

which have defiled that temple of the all-merciful God, in the rash assumption of some other right than the right of exclusion, and to sanction which these instances have been alledged, the Protestant of the nineteenth century turns with abhorrence. He searches for any other principle and any other right in vain. Moreover, these very instances require only an humble consideration to set them also in the manifest light of cases of exclusion.

To understand this, it is necessary to state what is meant by excommunication or exclusion from the Church. Evidently, it is not exclusion from any particular *place*; for the Church is not such; but from certain common privileges. These are, the benefits of the Christian covenant, or of some portion of it. Now let us see whether this, and no more, was not the case with those whom St. Paul delivered over to Satan.

In those days the *presence* of the Holy Ghost was manifested by extraordinary signs, that is, certain sensible tokens were given in testimony of it. The presence of the evil Being was in like manner manifested or evidenced by possession and its various symptoms. Now, what is more natural than that in the same dispensation, as the *presence* of God's Spirit in the Christian was made visible by an appropriate sign, so the removal of its protection, and the abandonment of its object, for a season, to the enemy, should be evidenced by some corresponding sign of evil agency, such as, for instance, marked

the case of a demoniac. And, as the power of causing the former sign to appear was vested only in the apostles, the case would naturally be the same with respect to the sign of evil, or the sign of desertion. It is to be remembered, that there was—that there is—no intermediate condition between the absence of the Holy Spirit and the presence of the Evil Spirit; and where the influence of the one ceases, that of the other must begin. “He that is not with me,” (said our Lord,) “is against me<sup>s</sup>,”—all is Mammon’s that is not God’s.

On the same principle, the case of Ananias may perhaps be explained. It was *final exclusion* from God’s Church, accompanied by the *only sign which could prove that the spiritual punishment was final*. Why that offence was so visited is not now important. Most probably, (as was elsewhere suggested,) it was an attempt to elude the extraordinary suggestions of the Spirit; and if so, the more appropriate seems the extraordinary mark of spiritual punishment.

It is by no means necessary, however, to the correctness of the view here taken of ecclesiastical discipline, that the nature of Ananias’s crime and punishment should be shewn not to form any exception to it. Like the pardoning of the thief on the cross, it arose out of circumstances which cannot recur in the ordinary course of the world; circumstances not only extraordinary, but of those so

<sup>s</sup> Luke xi. 23.

characterized, the most solemn and important. The one was a remarkable specimen of mercy and forgiveness, and as such fitly appended to the scene in which God was exhibiting himself as our Saviour; the other, an awful instance of severity and punishment, and no less properly attached to the scene in which God was exhibiting himself as the Ruler of his people.

But it may be urged, do not these remarks lead to a suspicious conclusion? If the case be so, ecclesiastical punishments would be attended with spiritual privations. For although all extraordinary signs are withheld, still this is no reason for presuming that the sentence of the Church should be less effectual. The extraordinary manifestation in this, as in the analogous instance of the gifts of the Spirit, was only a *proof* of the reality of that which was invisible and insensible; and it has been already shewn, that the cessation of these *visible and sensible signs*, without further proof, leaves the Christian bound to believe in the continuance of all the invisible operations, to which, for a time, they bore testimony. Now would not this be a perverse proceeding which should deprive the culprit of grace and assistance, at the very time when most he needs it? It does not deprive him of it. It only sets on him the *mark* of that privation which would, at all events, have taken place. Thus, exclusion from good company does not *cause*, but only *indicates*, ill-manners. If God's Spirit prevents and assists

the Christian in proportion to his own exertions, he must always have less and less in proportion as he needs it more. But surely a change of circumstances may make him more ready to attend to the feeble voice, than he was before, when it was louder. Israel may hear in Babylon what it would not hear in Judea. And such, as far as regards the offender, is really the object of excommunication. If inflicted on an innocent person, it could, of course, no more have an evil effect, than Baptism or the Lord's Supper would have a good one on a person who receives either unworthily.

Ecclesiastical censures have, however, fallen into disuse amongst us; and whatever be the counterbalancing benefits of this disuse, it has been attended with one ill effect. The wholesome association between the outward form and the inward benefit of Church communion, is no longer generally *felt*. Absence from the sacraments and from public worship has lost the character of privation; and whilst the apostles and early preachers laboured only to direct their congregations to a proper behaviour at the Lord's table and in the public assemblies, with our ministers now, not the least difficult portion of exhortation is employed in persuading them to attend.

A further mention of those offenders in the Church of Corinth, whose case has furnished the ground for these remarks, is made in the apostle's second Epistle to that Church. In order that the



matter might be settled without his personal interference, he prolonged his stay at Ephesus ; expecting to hear a favourable account of the impression made by his first Epistle. Meantime, an occurrence took place which hastened his departure. In his former journey, the cure of the Pythoness excited the ill-will of her master, whose gains were at an end, and caused the first persecution of his party which originated with the idolatrous Gentiles. At Ephesus, the famous seat of the temple of Diana, and “ of the image which fell down from Jupiter<sup>h</sup>,” he was exposed even to greater danger, from the tendency of his doctrine to ruin all those trades which depended for their support on idolatry and false worship. Demetrius, a silversmith, entered into a combination with those of his own trade ; and the tumult excited by the appeal made to the superstitious feelings of the multitude in behalf of their tutelary goddess, whose shrine they represented as likely to be forsaken, was with some difficulty appeased. St. Paul, after having been subjected to one night’s imprisonment, thought it prudent to withdraw for the time, and to pursue his journey at once to Corinth. The prejudice, however, which now began to be awakened against Christianity, was not of a character likely to pass away with the occasion. Throughout the world, the livelihood of a portion of every community

<sup>h</sup> Acts xix. 35.

arose out of the sale of images, the decoration of temples, and, more than all, the rearing of victims for the festivals. In proportion as Christianity spread, this circumstance formed an increasing source of opposition in the idolatrous world, scarcely less active and determined than that which was caused by Jewish prejudice among the more enlightened portion of mankind. The complaints and informations which from time to time were laid before the magistrates, against this "pestilent sect," as it was termed, although made under the various pleas of loyalty, patriotism, or piety, originated, for the most part, as in the case of Demetrius, out of self-interest. Pliny, whose account deserves credit as an official document, and as the result of an investigation made by a highly-gifted mind, evidently saw through all this; and accordingly he mentions, as the best proof and symptom of returning order and content produced by his measures, that the victims were once more brought to market, and that the altars blazed. As yet, however, the Church was too insignificant to attract the notice of the imperial government, although the tumult at Ephesus proves that it was spreading fast.

It was not until St. Paul's arrival in Greece, that he received any tidings of the Corinthians; to whom he immediately addressed his second Epistle, to prepare them for his coming. To Corinth, accordingly, he proceeded, and made it, as before, the boundary of his third apostolical journey. It is not,

however, improbable, that, but for his anxiety to be at Jerusalem in time for the approaching festival, he would now have attempted to pass over into Italy, and visit Rome. The information which he had received respecting that important Church, could not but have rendered him anxious to perform his errand as soon as might be amongst them. His Epistle to it, written from Corinth, amply testifies this; and explains the cause of his anxiety. Converted as it would seem by Jewish Christians, whose eyes were not yet open to the true nature of St. Paul's mission, they had received the same erroneous impression respecting the obligation of the old law on the converted idolater, which still prevailed in the great body of the Church at Jerusalem. Accordingly, the whole tenour of his Epistle bespeaks an anxiety to remove this mistake; and the strong terms in which he has, naturally enough, advocated the independence of the Gentiles, by speaking of them as, equally with the Jewish people, "elect" by the foreknowledge of God, are as remarkable for the perverse interpretation which is often put on them, as for the striking transcript which they present of the apostle's anxious zeal, in endeavouring to effect by letter what circumstances prevented him from doing in person.

*St. Paul and the Ephesian Presbyters*<sup>1</sup>.

St. Paul's company on his return was increased by the addition of those deputed from the several Churches to convey their respective contributions to Jerusalem. It was a journey of no small risk. Independently of the prophetic bodings with which the Holy Spirit addressed him by sundry individuals as he passed onwards, he could not but feel that his mission to the Gentiles had rendered his life unsafe any where among his countrymen. And what could he expect at Jerusalem? His very departure from Corinth was marked with plots against him, which obliged him to change his intention of going by sea, and to retrace his steps through Achaia and Macedonia. Mitylene, Chios, Samos, Trogyllium, and Miletus, formed the next line of his course; and by this time the feast of Pentecost, at which, for some reason, he earnestly desired to be present, was so near as to render it impossible that he should visit Ephesus, which he thought it equally incumbent on him to do. To obviate this difficulty, he requested the attendance of the Ephesian Elders or Presbyters at Miletus; a circumstance which is here noticed, because in the interview which thereupon took place, he reminds them that the Holy Ghost had made them Bishops, (*ἐπισκόπους*), a term which has

<sup>1</sup> Acts xx.

not before occurred in the sacred narrative. Having, in the last section, examined into the nature of offences against the Church, and of the penalties due to them, I shall take this occasion of inquiring, with whom the power of inflicting and remitting these penalties was lodged ; and not only this power, but all other authority and administration, whether supreme or subordinate.

One previous caution may, perhaps, be requisite. Various objections have been urged from time to time against our Church government, against the three orders of the Church, and the functions which they respectively exercise. To answer these merely by an attempt to prove their existence in the apostolical age and their Scriptural sanction, is to allow the objector an unfair advantage, and to submit our own minds to an unfair view of the question. The proof of the contrary rests with those who object. We find these matters so established, and tracing them further and further back, we still find evidence of them, without any coincident marks of human innovation. Tried by the touchstone of Scripture, they are found to be at least not inconsistent with its records ; and therefore it would be a wanton and dangerous exercise of the Church's discretionary power to annul them. This was the spirit of the Reformation in England ; and on this principle it has taught us, *Thus far shalt thou go, and no further.*

There are two questions which in a discussion of this point require distinct consideration. The first



is, What were the orders of the primitive Church ? The second, Were they intended altogether, or partly, or not at all, as models for the formation of ecclesiastical establishments of aftertimes ?

As to the first question, it may admit of a different answer from different periods of the apostolical history ; inasmuch as the Church economy was certainly not framed at once, but rose progressively with the exigencies of the Church. At the very period on which we are now dwelling, it is obvious, that the term Bishop and Presbyter were not only applied to the same order, but that no order of ministers (setting aside the apostles) was generally established, superior to the presbytery. At a later period in the apostolical history, the same assertion would be altogether untenable<sup>k</sup>.

The assembly, or ἐκκλησία, must from its nature have been the only order, besides that of the apostles, on the first attempt of the Christians to act as a society. All Christians composed this body, and the term, in short, signified the Church. But whether this general assembly at any period exercised any elective, legislative, or other powers, may perhaps be questioned. No doubt the Church or

<sup>k</sup> Theology, like every other system, has its *technical* terms. In a *system of theology*, then, we should be startled to find such various uses of the same important term. But the Bible is not a *system of theology*, and has not any technical language. Its use is to furnish matter which the Church digests—to *prove* what the Church *teaches*.

Assembly is mentioned as taking part with the presbyters in the elections and enactments; but when we consider the immense concourse, which a general meeting would suppose in the very earliest times, is it likely that any one *private room* would be found capable of containing all? On the other hand, is it likely that in Jerusalem especially, so large a multitude would be permitted to meet *in public*, openly discuss their affairs, and take measures for the support and propagation of obnoxious doctrines, when even individuals were exposed to continual risk in their preaching and other ministry? The meetings of Christians for purposes of prayer, and other devotional exercises, must, for the same reason, have taken place in different houses assigned for the purpose. And this (as has been before observed) may illustrate the expression used by the historian in his account of Paul's search after the disciples "in every one of the houses<sup>1</sup>," (*κατὰ τοὺς οἴκους*;) which, no doubt, implies, that he obtained information concerning their several places of meeting, and by going from one to another at the time of prayer was sure of apprehending some. The same allusion may be perceived in St. Paul's expression of "the Church in the house of Aquila and Priscilla<sup>m</sup>," &c. Such a division of the Christian body into separate congregations would require the appointment of some one, at least, to preside

<sup>1</sup> Acts viii. 3.<sup>m</sup> 1 Cor. xvi. 19.

over and officiate in each; and also of some one or more subordinate ministers or deacons, such as have been before noticed. When, therefore, we read that a decree was made, &c. by the apostles, presbyters, and the whole Church, one of two things must be supposed to have taken place: either the presbyters took each the sense of his own congregation; or the presbyters and other official persons, it may be, met as the representatives, each of his own congregation, and all of the Church collectively.

The former supposition is certainly encumbered with more and greater difficulties than the latter. The subject proposed at these Christian meetings seems, from the tenour of the narrative throughout, to have been then first presented to the Church in any shape; and the decisions took place before the meeting was dissolved. There are no marks of any previous notice of the matter to be discussed, so as to enable the several presbyters to consult the opinions and wishes of their constituents; and the decision took place without any interval to allow of an after consultation.

Against the remaining supposition, namely, that the presbyters and other official persons, perhaps, met as the plenipotentiaries each of his own body, the strongest obstacle lies in the phrase, "It seemed good to the presbyters with the whole Church<sup>n</sup>." Now this expression, after all, may

<sup>n</sup> Acts xv. 22.

imply no more than that it seemed good to the presbyters, and whatever other members of the Council, in conjunction with them, may be called the whole Church, because appointed to represent it. In like manner, when the Council of Jerusalem declared respecting their famous decree, that “it seemed good to them *and* to the Holy Ghost<sup>o</sup>,” our knowledge of the relation in which these stood to one another, prevents all doubt ; but the expression itself, without any such clue, would make it questionable, whether the Council and the Holy Spirit were not recorded as two separate sources of the ecclesiastical authority from which the decree had emanated. Now the sentences on which we ground our conjectures respecting the authority of the whole Christian body, are precisely so circumstanced.

The appointment of Deacons has been elsewhere discussed, and the origin of the Presbytery has been now suggested. The order of Bishops therefore only remains to be accounted for. At the period of St. Paul’s summons to the Church of Ephesus, no such order could have existed there ; and, if not in so large and important a Church, probably nowhere. The *title* cannot imply it, for it is one used for all the presbyters of Ephesus ; and their number proves that he was not addressing bishops, for they came from one Church. Again, although the word

<sup>o</sup> Acts xv. 28.

occurs elsewhere in St. Paul's Epistles, it cannot intend one chief governor of any Church; because his Epistles are addressed to the Churches, as to assemblies in whom all the authority was vested. The term bishop became afterwards appropriated to an order, of which we cannot infer the existence, certainly from any expression of St. Luke. How such an order should have arisen, it is not difficult to discover. St. Paul's Epistles to Timothy and Titus present us with at least its embryo form. Not only are both commissioned to ordain ministers, to determine matters left undetermined, and to inflict ecclesiastical punishments, even to excommunication<sup>p</sup>; but their respective dioceses are distinctly marked out. Ephesus was assigned to Timothy, Crete to Titus<sup>q</sup>. At the same time it would certainly seem that, in Timothy's case especially, the appointment was rather that of *locum tenens* for the apostle, and so far a temporary office. But this, far from being an objection to the apostolic authority of episcopacy, really supplies us with the clue to trace its origin and object. What was needed for a time at Ephesus or Crete, in the temporary absence of the presiding apostle, would be permanently requisite, when death for ever deprived these Churches of apostolical superintendence. The same cause, in short, which produced

<sup>p</sup> 1 Tim. v. 22. Titus i. 5. iii. 10.

<sup>q</sup> 1 Tim. i. 3. Titus i. 5.



the appointment of presbyters, continued, as the number of congregations in each Church increased, to render the rise of a new order equally necessary. A small presbytery, occasionally visited by an apostle, might not require a head; but a large one, especially as the apostles were removed by death or accident, would soon feel this want. That such an order was required before the close of the apostolic era, the then state of Christianity would render of itself nearly certain. Although at the time of the appointments of Titus and Timothy they may not have been general, yet when St. John wrote his Revelations, each of the seven Churches of Asia had its own bishop. And if this were so in that district, which then alone enjoyed the guidance of an apostle, much more was it likely to have been the case elsewhere. St. John, we know, addressed them as *angels*; but whether by a figure of speech, or because such was at that time their only designation, no candid mind can doubt that an episcopal order is intended; and that to them, as such, commands and revelations were given by God through his last apostle<sup>r</sup>. Thus, episcopacy would seem to

<sup>r</sup> The genuine remains of the apostolic Fathers shew, that during the age immediately following, official letters were addressed indifferently to and from "the Church," "the bishop and presbyters," and "the bishop," although the more usual form was still "the Church." But that this was then considered in the same light, as if the bishop of the Church alone had been specified, may be inferred from the first Epistle of Clement, which

be the finishing of the sacred edifice, which the apostles were commissioned to build. Until this was completed and firm, they presented themselves as props to whatever part required such support. One by one they were withdrawn; and at length the whole building having "grown together into an holy temple," the Lord's promise was fulfilled to the one surviving apostle. He only tarried until God's last temple was complete, and the Lord's second "coming" unto it<sup>1</sup> had been announced by an especial vision<sup>2</sup>.

although called Clement's, by the united testimony of all who mention it, professes to be, and is in substance, an Epistle from "the Church of God at Rome, to the Church of God at Corinth." Polycarp's is addressed from "Polycarp and the presbyters with him" to "the Church of God at Philippi." Ignatius addresses two Epistles to the Smyrnæans, one to "the Church at Smyrna," the other to "Polycarp bishop of the Church at Smyrna." And that this latter, no less than the former, was a letter to the Church, and not to its bishop personally, will be evident from the following passages in it, "Hearken unto the bishop, that God also may hearken unto you. My soul, be security for them that submit to their bishop, with their presbyters and deacons." sect. vi. "Labour with one another, contend together, run together, &c."

<sup>2</sup> Ephesians ii. 21.

<sup>1</sup> See Malachi iii. 1.

<sup>2</sup> The revelation to St. John, in the close of his life, presents several obvious points of connection with the prophetic promise, that he should tarry until the Lord's coming. Throughout the Scriptures, and especially in our Saviour's language, the Christian Church is designated by the emblem of the temple. Its foundation stones, its corner stone, its holy of holies, its one high priest, are images familiar to the sacred writers. Nor is the connection to be considered as fanciful, and merely founded

There is still another point to be settled. Was this form of Church government intended to be perpetual, and universal,—is it enjoined on all Christian societies in every age?

On the one hand, it may be urged, that as the constitution of the Church was only what was then most convenient for the support and propagation of religion, whenever that end may be better attained by any alteration or deviation, the innovators are acting up to the spirit of the original institution, and thereby are more truly followers of the apostles, than those who sacrifice the *object* to the observance of the *means*, which are only valuable

on an accidental analogy, serving the purpose of illustrations. The temple, its uses, and its ordinances, were designed, like the other portions of the older establishment, as types of the new. It was, therefore, the image in which ancient prophecy represented the future Church. Of this last temple it was foretold, that its glory should surpass Solomon's; and into this it is that Malachi proclaimed the Lord's coming. *The final mode of divine residence*, intended by this coming, commenced when the various parts of the Church were completed, and the extraordinary portions removed. St. John was permitted to see all ready for this before his death. He was permitted to do more. The future fate and history of that figurative temple was revealed to him, at the time his Master came to announce the filling of it with his glory. The prophetic history is of course all that concerned us, the fulfilment of the promise only him. Yet he has not left the former without a memorandum, as it were, of the import of that revelation to him. The terms in which it opens are, "Behold he *cometh*;" and the close, "He which testifieth these things, saith, Surely, I *come* quickly: Amen. Even so, *come*, Lord Jesus."

as regards that object. Those who maintain the other side of the question may assert, that these being the means originally appointed by the Holy Spirit, through which His office as governor of the Church was to be exercised, we have no right to alter them, any more than we are authorized to alter the means of grace, unless some positive permission can be shewn; and that it is, moreover, a wicked presumption to suppose, that any other means, (however humanly probable,) would more truly obtain the object of Church government. As a reason why this form of Church government was not positively enjoined, it may be suggested, that it was not like an abstract doctrine or precept, the only safe mode of recording which is "the written word," but a matter *which is its own record*. Like the Mysteries of the heathen, it was a practical document; the daily and continual practice of the Church, perpetuated from one age to another, superseded all need of other record.

Much of this latter statement is doubtless unanswerable. At the same time, it would be uncharitable and unchristian, to pronounce those to be no members of Christ's Church, who regulate their community without bishops. The particular arrangement of ministerial orders is of course the means, and the preservation of the Gospel, the end. Whether those, who have in any instance deviated from the pure apostolic practice, had cause to justify such a departure, (and such a case doubtless is

supposable,) is a matter between God and the Church itself. The case of those, too, who find themselves by birth members of such a society, is to be distinctly separated from the case of those, with whom the innovation originated.

*Some* departure in the form of government, from the pattern of the primitive Church, has necessarily taken place in every community, nor does this departure of itself imply presumption. A very large community, for instance, has every where required a new order above bishops themselves ; and this need being manifest, the appointment of the archiepiscopal office is as purely consonant to the apostolical views, as that of subordinate bishops. It has arisen in the same way, and in compliance with a similar need to that which gave rise to the episcopal order, in the apostolical Church ; namely, the increased extent and more complicated government of each Church. Thus, too, the appointment of catechists, once a branch of every Church establishment, was properly discontinued as soon as they ceased to be required ; and as properly has been revived in our colonies, where their services are once more applicable. The choro-episcopi served, in like manner, to meet another occasional emergency.

No Church has ever more anxiously and conscientiously shaped its course by the spirit, and by the very letter of the apostolic precedents, than has the Church of England. And yet even that Church has found circumstances powerful enough to justify



a deviation scarcely less momentous, in the transfer of supreme ecclesiastical authority to the civil magistrate. It is not merely a variation from the original architecture of Christ's holy building that constitutes disproportion and deformity. We must look also to the changing features of the scene around, and see whether these have not demanded corresponding alterations, and let these be the measure of our judgment.

*St. Paul at Jerusalem* <sup>x</sup>.

St. Paul's interview with the Ephesian elders was rendered peculiarly solemn and affecting, from a feeling of which he himself partook, that death awaited him at Jerusalem <sup>y</sup>. Still he went on, and the prophetic warnings which pursued him, and the anxious entreaties of his friends, continued to confirm his fears, and to sadden his pilgrimage, without inducing him to discontinue it <sup>z</sup>. On his arrival at Cæsarea especially, Agabus came from Judæa, and, by virtue of his prophetic gift, told him expressly by symbol and by word, that the Jews should bind him, and deliver him over to the Gentiles. So that he arrived at Jerusalem fully apprised of the perse-

<sup>x</sup> Acts xxi.

<sup>y</sup> This is another proof, that the prophetic spirit was not at his command, but dealt out to him by measure; and its suggestions perfectly distinguishable from other, even the strongest, impressions on the mind.

<sup>z</sup> Acts xx. 16.

cution which he was to encounter, and uncertain whether his life would be spared or not. The terms of Agabus's prediction were more likely to portend death ; for in that he was to be bound by the Jews, and delivered up to the Gentiles, the fate of his Lord and Master could not but recur to him, and seem likely to be now his own : nor was it, perhaps, any slight stimulus and support to him in his perseverance, that he seemed, in thus pressing on to Jerusalem, in spite of his own forebodings, and of the remonstrance of others, to be imitating him. The studious imitation of Christ, wherever any similarity of circumstances could be perceived and felt, forms a marked feature in the lives, not only of the apostles, but of the primitive worthies who inherited their tone of Christian feeling <sup>a</sup>.

On other grounds he had reason to surmise that his work was finished. His third apostolical journey was now ended, and the conversion of the Gentiles far enough advanced, to make it safe and expedient for him to communicate openly to the whole Church that secret, which had been hitherto confided to a select few. For this, probably, more even than to keep the feast, he had hastened his journey to Jerusalem. Whether the result of this open avowal would be the forfeit of life, might have been con-

<sup>a</sup> See the description of the martyrdom of Stephen and of James in the Acts. A similar remark applies to the account given of the deaths of Polycarp, Ignatius, and many more among the primitive Christians.

cealed from his prophetic view purposely to try him. At all events, the present might have seemed to him a seasonable period for the termination of his labours,—in all human probability it would be so. Hence the tender farewell, in which he had told the Church of Ephesus “ he should see their face no more <sup>b</sup> ;” hence his anxiety, even in haste, to pay them that parting visit ; hence, perhaps, that very haste and urgency, that with the enlightened views of a Christian indeed, but still with the patriotic feelings of one whose early habits had been moulded in the “ straitest sect” of the Jews, he might once more keep the festival with his countrymen, and die. His Master’s example might again, in this particular, have influenced the tone of mind which kept up his resolve to go on to Jerusalem. As he approached, what train of thought so natural and so cheering as the image of the blessed Jesus in *his* last journey to Jerusalem,—*his* earnestness to keep the passover there, unabated by the certain foreknowledge that he was to be bound by his countrymen, and delivered up to the Gentiles ?

Such then was, probably, the frame of mind with which St. Paul disclosed to the rulers of the Church of Jerusalem the true nature of his extraordinary apostleship to the Gentiles, and the properous result of three journeys amongst them. Like the other marvellous disclosures of the mysteries of the

<sup>b</sup> Acts xx. 38. See note *y*, p. 357.

new dispensation, it called forth that peculiar thanksgiving, which is styled in Scripture “glorifying God<sup>c</sup>.” Their joy and wonder were however immediately followed by a sense of the danger to which he stood exposed. One expedient suggested itself. It was proposed that he should join four Jewish Christians in performing the rite of purification in the temple<sup>d</sup>. This, it was thought, would convince the Jews of the real design of his mission; namely, that it was not, as far as concerned their law, to forbid the Jewish Christians to observe it, but only the Gentiles, and especially the idolaters. So public and unequivocal a testimony of conformity to the Mosaic ceremonies, would, it was thought, remove the worst ground of enmity against him, and at least soften down the spirit of ill-will. It produced however a contrary result. His appearance in the holy place was construed into a design to defile it, and the suspicion was confirmed by the accidental circumstance of Trophimus, (the Asiatic deputy and a Gentile convert,) having been seen with him within the hallowed precincts. Lysias, the commander of the Roman garrison, was obliged to interfere, and rescue him from the fury of the multitude. In vain he obtained permission to address them from the steps of the castle, whither they were conducting him to imprisonment. Eloquence, even such as Paul’s,

<sup>c</sup> Acts xxi. 19, 20.

<sup>d</sup> Acts xxi. 23.

conveying to them the avowal, that the kingdom of God was thrown open to Gentiles and idolaters, could only serve to exasperate them ; and it was with much difficulty that even then he was preserved from outrage and death.

Here his trial, at least his uncertain apprehensions, ended. That night the Lord stood by him, and informed him, that he was appointed to bear witness to Him in Rome<sup>c</sup>. In what manner the treacherous designs of his enemies were rendered subservient to this purpose is well known. His appeal from the tribunal of Festus to that of Cæsar was made, not only with the view of defeating the stratagem devised for sending him back to Jerusalem, but in fulfilment of the command of the Lord delivered to him that night. In obedience to this, he embraced the early opportunity, thus providentially afforded, for his visit to the imperial city.

<sup>c</sup> Acts xxiii. 11.



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## CHAP. VII.

### ST. PAUL'S FOURTH APOSTOLICAL JOURNEY.

A. D. 63—66.

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#### ROUTE.

Antipatris ; Cæsarea ; Sidon ; Myra ; Fair Havens ; Melita ; Syracuse ; Rhegium ; Puteoli ; Appii Forum ; Three Taverns ; Rome ; Italy ; Spain ; Crete ; Jerusalem ; Antioch in Syria<sup>a</sup>.

ST. LUKE's narrative, as has been already observed, was very evidently composed with the design of recording the progress of the Holy Spirit's dispensation through its several stages : first, as confined to the Jews ; next, as embracing the devout Gentiles also ; and lastly, as unlimited in its application, and open to idolaters of every caste<sup>b</sup>. On

<sup>a</sup> Acts xxiii. 31. to xxviii.

<sup>b</sup> Some intimations of this might be intended in the words, with which the Gospel opens, " Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to *write in order* ;" and with reference to this it is, perhaps, that we are told so pointedly in the 19th chapter of the Acts, ver. 21. " After these things were ended," (he had been recording the rapid progress which the word was making, and how it " mightily grew and prevailed,") " Paul purposed in the Spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, After I have been there *I must go to*

this account it is, that the first part of his little history embraces the ministry of all the apostles ; then is occupied chiefly with St. Peter, as the person selected by the Spirit for the first extension of the Gospel scheme ; then it follows Barnabas and Paul through the next and last enlargement of the covenant, for the management of which they had been appointed ; and, at length, is confined to the ministry of St. Paul, in whose hands it was left on the separation between him and Barnabas. With equal propriety, the account closes with the period, when the apostle of the idolatrous Gentiles, having formally announced the greatest mystery of the Gospel to the Church of Jerusalem, has arrived at the capital of the world, and the work has been commenced in the imperial city itself. His voyage thither is accordingly related with an unusual minuteness of detail ; not only, perhaps, because of the miraculous circumstances which it embraces, but because it was preparatory to that which the historian considered the important boundary of his plan, his arrival and first ministry at Rome.

*Rome also.* Rome was the mistress and representative of the world ; and when therefore the apostle had preached the Gospel there, our Saviour's declaration concerning that sign which was to precede the destruction of Jerusalem, might be fairly understood to have had its accomplishment. " This Gospel must first be preached in *all the world*."

*St. Paul a prisoner at Rome<sup>c</sup>.*

Among the faithful friends and assistants who formed his company here, are recorded, I. Timothy, who came with him from Macedonia, and whose name appears joined with his in the Epistles to the Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon<sup>d</sup>.

II. Luke, who had been long his constant companion, as appears from the form of his own narrative<sup>e</sup>; and who is mentioned as still with him in the Epistle to the Colossians, and in that to Philemon<sup>f</sup>.

III. Aristarchus, one of his fellow travellers from Macedonia, and it would seem now his fellow prisoner also<sup>g</sup>, (Coloss. iv. 10.)

IV. Tychicus, another of his fellow travellers, and his messenger to the Colossian Church<sup>h</sup>, (Coloss. iv. 7.)

V. Lastly, Mark the nephew of Barnabas, (Coloss. iv. 10.) who had now regained the esteem and trust which he forfeited on his first journey with Paul.

The account given by Festus of his prisoner could not but have been favourable; as he was permitted to lodge in a "hired house," with free access to him

<sup>c</sup> Acts xviii.

<sup>d</sup> Acts xx. 4. Philip. i. 1. Col. i. 1. Philem. 1.

<sup>e</sup> Acts xx. 5, 6.

<sup>f</sup> Col. iv. 14. Philem. 24.

<sup>g</sup> Acts xx. 4.

<sup>h</sup> Acts xx. 4.

from all his friends, and sufficient liberty to be able to discuss the subject of his imprisonment, and the persecution which had led to it, with the chief Jewish settlers at Rome<sup>1</sup>. Under these circumstances, he was probably better able to effect the object of his mission in the first instance, than if he had come to Rome free, and more obviously by choice. He was respected by the Jews, as one whose situation placed him immediately under the protection of the government; whilst the government was seasonably made acquainted, from the nature of the charge against him, with the innocent object of his mission; and therefore was unlikely to be excited against him, as “a pestilent fellow, or a ring-leader of sedition.” For two years the Gospel was thus suffered to take root in the seat of empire unmolested and almost unobserved, through a train of providential circumstances, such as the importance of the case seems to have required. A tumult in Rome, like that which had occurred at Ephesus and Philippi, would, humanly speaking, have been fatal to the infant state of the religion, and as such, seems to have been expressly guarded against by Providence.

The particular mode in which the apostle made his first appearance at Rome, was serviceable to the cause in another point of view. It brought him into an intercourse with the soldiery. His

<sup>1</sup> Acts xxviii. 30, 31.



voyage, with all its perils and the miracles to which it gave rise, might have been intended to impress the minds of the soldiers who guarded him (as was actually the result) with the conviction that he was an extraordinary man. Its length might have been protracted with the same view; and the record may have been left in exact minuteness to direct our attention to the circumstance. His integrity had been proved by his mode of life with them generally, and especially by his disinterested care to preserve the whole crew in the shipwreck,—his view of futurity, by foretelling that accident,—his support and guidance by a superior power, from the deliverance in which all shared, as well as by the harmless efforts of the viper, and the healing virtue of his prayer. All this would naturally be related, and even magnified, in the social meetings between the soldiers returned from foreign service and their comrades and friends at home. The prætorian guard itself would find in the marvellous prisoner from the east a subject for passing conversation, and his name and acts would be known in Cæsar's palace, and among Cæsar's household. Curiosity would induce some of all these descriptions of persons to visit him; and of these the conversion of a portion could not but take place. Such then was the case. To the Philippians he sends, in his Epistle, the brotherly remembrance of the "saints,

especially those who were of Cæsar's household<sup>k</sup>," assures them, that what had befallen him, instead of being a hindrance, had so far proved a furtherance to his Gospel, that his bonds were made manifest in Christ in the whole Prætorium, and to all others<sup>l</sup>. Before the first persecution of Nero, the little mustard seed had become a tree too firmly rooted to be shaken by the storm; and the Roman historians speak of the converts to Christianity in the Capital, as an immense multitude of different ages and sexes.

The apostle was not unmindful of those Churches, where others were now engaged in following up the ministry which he had commenced, nor was he forgotten by them. His first Epistle from Rome was occasioned by the arrival of Epaphroditus from Philippi, whence he had been sent by the brethren to inquire after him, and to take some supplies for him<sup>m</sup>. Epaphras arrived from Colosse soon after on the same errand<sup>n</sup>. This was the occasion of his

<sup>k</sup> Philip. iv. 22.

<sup>l</sup> Philip. i. 12, 13.

<sup>m</sup> Philip. ii. 25. and iv. 18.

<sup>n</sup> Epaphras's visit must have caused some suspicion, as for some reason he appears certainly to have been detained in confinement with Paul, (Philem. 23.) Unless this expression, as well as that relating to Aristarchus, be taken, not literally, but as implying that they were the companions of Paul the prisoner, and by their society had put themselves in the condition of prisoners.

Epistles to the Churches of Philippi and Colosse<sup>o</sup>. As Ephesus was so near to the latter city, Tychicus, who was his messenger thither, was commissioned with another for the Ephesians<sup>p</sup>. The prevailing tone of all these Epistles is that of warning against the seductive practices of the Judaizing Christians, whose doctrine had now begun to be tinged with the oriental philosophy.

It is pleasing to pursue the apostle, from this his path of public duties, to any of those scenes of private life which bring us more, as it were, into a personal acquaintance with him. Such was the occasion of his Epistle to Philemon, in behalf of his slave Onesimus.

*St. Paul and Onesimus<sup>q</sup>.*

In the zeal with which the advocates of humanity and the natural rights of man, have endeavoured to abolish slavery from the civilized world, it has been not unusual to represent it as inconsistent with Christianity. On the other hand, the absence of all negative precepts respecting it, the frequent allusions and comparisons adopted by our Lord himself from the state of slavery, to illustrate the condition of God's *servants*, and, lastly, the correspondence between Paul and the master of Onesimus, without any reproof from the bold and

<sup>o</sup> Coloss. i. 7, 8.

<sup>p</sup> Eph. vi. 21.

<sup>q</sup> Epistle to Philemon.

uncompromising apostle to his convert Philemon, on his assumed right of ownership, even over Onesimus, have been urged as tacit sanctions to the system, whatever abstract objections may lie against it. The subject for its own sake alone would not perhaps have claimed attention ; but it furnishes a remarkable illustration of a general system observed in the propagation of Christianity, for the sake of which it is here noticed. The whole controversy proceeds on the mistaken notion, that slavery is a subject to which the precepts of Christianity were applicable. But surely, whatever be the magnitude of the evil, and great it doubtless is, it is a *political*, not a *moral* evil ; and as such, we may as well expect to find arguments in the New Testament for or against the Christian character of absolute monarchy or republicanism, as against slavery. Immoral and unchristian practices there are doubtless which *arise out of* this political or social evil, as well as out of tyranny ; and these are consistently stigmatized in the New Testament. The *ἀνδραποδισταί*, the men-stealers, are enumerated by St. Paul himself in a catalogue which embraces the vilest of mankind<sup>9</sup> ; but with the question of Slavery the apostle had no more concern officially, than with the universal usurpation of Rome. As in the case of all other institutions, customs, and forms of society *not religious*, Christianity took no cogni-

<sup>9</sup> 1 Tim. i. 10.

zance of this; Christ's was not a kingdom of this world, and interfered with nothing in the forms of any society. On the one hand, therefore, it might as well be asserted, that Christianity sanctioned the abominable tyranny of Nero, because Paul made no attempt to seduce from their allegiance his prætorian converts. On the other hand, with the same shew of reason, it might be contended, that inasmuch as the welfare and happiness of the several States of Europe are most agreeable to the Christian views, the balance of power should be maintained, not as a matter of political expediency, but as a Christian duty.

*St. Paul at liberty.*

For the remainder of St. Paul's fourth apostolical journey, we are indebted chiefly to the hints scattered throughout his later Epistles, those, namely, to the Hebrews, to Titus, and to Timothy<sup>r</sup>. From the former it appears, that on his release he continued his ministry from Rome to other parts of Italy; but as to the precise object, or the result of his labours there, we have no certain account; and it is not desirable to mix the traditionary records which exist, with his authentic history. It is a scruple, indeed, which the historian who is passing the line which separates the one from the other,

<sup>r</sup> Heb. xiii. 23, 24. Titus i. 5. iii. 12. and 1 Tim. i. 3.



the inspired from the uninspired records, cannot be too cautious not to violate. It is well known what errors have from time to time crept into the popular views of Christian believers from an incautious or an artful blending of the two ; and the reader and the writer alike should be anxiously watchful in treading the space of meeting, that the character of every fact should be preserved, and divine authority kept for ever distinct from human. It is partly from the one source, partly from the other, that Spain may be supposed to have formed the next stage of his ministry. From his Epistle to the Romans, it appears to have been his intention to proceed from them to Spain<sup>\*</sup> ; and as the early Christian writers<sup>†</sup> relate, that such a visit was paid, there can be little doubt that Spain was now included within the compass of his mission. Beyond this general statement, however, it is useless to pursue the thread of truth which one might hope to extricate from the legendary fables with which every Church was wont to deck its origin, in the same spirit wherein Livy describes great states and cities as referring their foundation uniformly to the gods<sup>‡</sup>. From

<sup>\*</sup> Rom. xv. 24.

<sup>†</sup> Chrys. Orat. 7. in St. Paul, tom. xiii. p. 59. (edit. Saville.) Clement also states, in his Epistle to the Corinthians, that he preached “ both in the East and in the West.” Ep. c. 5.

<sup>‡</sup> In Præfatione Hist.

Spain, again, we still more certainly trace his course homeward through Crete, Jerusalem, and thence to Antioch in Syria<sup>x</sup>.

<sup>x</sup> Titus i. 5. Heb. xiii. 23, 24.



## CHAP. VIII.

### ST. PAUL'S FIFTH APOSTOLICAL JOURNEY.

A. D. 66, 67.

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#### ROUTE.

Colosse; Philippi; Nicopolis in Epirus; Corinth; Troas; Miletum in Crete; Rome<sup>a</sup>.

AS the history of St. Paul draws to a close, the authentic materials become more scanty. All that we learn from his own writings is, that from Jerusalem and Antioch he soon resumed his travels, purposing, no doubt, as was his custom, to visit those places in which during the preceding journey he had planted the faith. His route, too, may from the same sources be recognized through the places above noted, without much, however, to instruct us in the progress made at each of them. The Colossians and Philippians he might be induced to visit, if merely to express his sense of their kindness during his late imprisonment.

From Troas he sailed to Italy. But the state of

<sup>a</sup> Philip. i. 25. ii. 24. Titus iii. 12. 2 Tim. iv. 20. 2 Tim. iv. 13, 20. 2 Tim. i. 16, 17.

public feeling had undergone a lamentable change since his last visit there. Perhaps the Jews had been busy in his absence, spreading, as was their custom, calumnies against Christianity and Paul. Perhaps the Gnostic heresy, which by this time had made considerable progress, might have generated or aided the prejudice. From whatever cause, he found the Christians treated, according to the representations of Suetonius<sup>d</sup> and Tacitus<sup>e</sup>, as an abominable sect, and deserving the hatred of all mankind. It would seem, nevertheless, that he was for a while successful in baffling the accusations of his enemies. But “the time of his departure was at hand ; he had fought the good fight, and his course was finished<sup>f</sup>.” As the persecution in which he surffeed was not confined to him, but for the first time became a public measure, so as to comprehend the whole body of Christians, it deserves a separate consideration.

<sup>d</sup> In Nerone, c. 16.

<sup>e</sup> Annal. lib. xv. c. 44.

<sup>f</sup> 2 Tim. iv. 6, 7, 8.



## NERONIAN OR FIRST PERSECUTION.

A. D. 64.

DURING the reigns of Tiberius and Claudius, Christianity passed unmolested, and almost unnoticed by the Roman government<sup>g</sup>. At Rome itself no tumult, such as occurred in the provinces, had attracted the attention of the government to it. In the provinces, too, the interference of the civil magistrate had been generally exercised to protect the innocent victims of popular prejudice. Whatever may be thought of the tradition, that Tiberius proposed to the Senate the enrolment of Christ amongst the deities of the empire, it is certain that no encouragement was given by the Emperor further to indulge the Jews in their malice, in consequence of Pilate's report of the crucifixion, and of the subsequent proceedings of his followers. The procurator ended his days in disgrace and exile; nor is it very improbable, that some rebuke might have been given him for his conduct on that particular occasion; and that owing to this it was that the enemies of our crucified Lord quietly submitted to the mortification of seeing their scheme baffled by the bold assertion of his resurrection, without obtaining from the

<sup>g</sup> The Edict of Claudius, no doubt, included Christians as a sect of Jews, but was not directed against them specifically.

Roman authority another blow to suppress it. Under Claudius we have seen Paul, even in the character of a criminal, enjoying the favour of Cæsar's household ; and Nero himself would hardly have been induced to commence the work of persecution, either from political motives, or from personal dislike. Alarmed at the odium which he had incurred by the burning of Rome, whether truly or falsely attributed to him, he appears only to have cast his eye round for an object on which he might conveniently divert the popular fury. The Christians had become a cause of jealousy to so many, that they naturally presented themselves to his unprincipled mind as precisely the objects he wanted. On them, therefore, the guilt was charged ; and in allusion to the nature of their crime<sup>h</sup>, they were burned as public spectacles of amusement : in the exhibition of which, the idle ingenuity which was displayed in aiding the scenic effect, seems more unnatural and inhuman than the most brutal acts of malevolence. Nero escaped : the great mass of people cared not on whom they were avenged for their losses and sufferings ; and a large party looked on with silent and malicious satisfaction, at the apparent ruin and suppression of a class of men who had become the objects of

<sup>h</sup> They were smeared with pitch, as if to represent torches, and so burnt, in reference to their pretended crime. Taciti Ann. lib. xv. c. 44.

the deadliest antipathy. Of these secret enemies, a large portion were Jews.

The peculiar character of the Jews of this age cannot but strike the attentive inquirer into the history of the times as singular—as marked by an unnatural readiness to seize every occasion of boldly claiming the blood of their enemies. As a nation, they displayed perpetually an inveterate malice and a monstrous delight in acts of revenge, such as ordinarily only exists in certain individuals who are exceptions to their sect or nation. All this admits of explanation from their singular fate. Dwelling in all the great cities of the empire, their malevolent feelings were doubly excited, by the presence of their political oppressors, and by the triumph of idolatry. This for a time did not produce any sudden burst of mutiny; which, according to the usual course of things, would have subsided into torpid and slavish insensibility, as each unsuccessful effort rendered them more hopeless, and their oppressors more watchful and more imperious. There was a secret amongst them, which at once fostered their malice and restrained its ebullition; which gave a higher tone to their sense of wrongs, and yet stifled their complaints; it was the daily and hourly hope of a temporal Messiah, and the certain presage of retribution, in obtaining through him dominion over their rulers, and being made the oppressors instead of the oppressed. Like the assassin who had attended on his master for years,

and crouched beneath his blows without a murmur, waiting for the moment of revenge ; so waited the Jewish people, inmates of every city, and even favourites of the court : to all outward appearance content and peaceable citizens, so much so as to be able to separate their cause from that of the persecuted Christians, but in secret nourishing daily the feelings which at length found vent and caused their ruin. To this may be traced their obstinacy beyond human nature in maintaining the last siege of their city, as well as the monstrous scenes which were exhibited in Cyprus, Alexandria, and elsewhere, and which are, perhaps, the bloodiest on the pages of history, not excepting those of the French Revolution<sup>1</sup>.

Among the causes which would produce an increasing party-spirit opposed to the Christians among the Gentiles also, no one, perhaps, was more powerful than that sense of interest, which operated with the large class of tradesmen and artisans. As long as the tenets of their religion were confined to few, its character was as abominable to the pious Gentile indeed

<sup>1</sup> See Note to Gibbon, vol. ii. p. 377. from Dion Cassius, lib. lxxviii. p. 1145. " In Cyrene they massacred 220,000 Greeks ; in Cyprus, 240,000. In Egypt a very great multitude. Many of these unhappy victims were sawed asunder, according to a precedent which David had given the sanction of his example. The victorious Jews devoured the flesh, licked up the blood, and twisted the entrails like a girdle round their bodies." Their misapplication of Scripture example forcibly reminds the Englishman of some domestic scenes, never, let us trust, to be repeated.

as when it spread abroad ; but it was then only that it sensibly affected the gains of the silversmith and the sculptor, the seller of victims, or the expounder of oracles. It was then that it operated on the public feeling in each separate place, as the introduction either of a body of superior artists, or a sale of better manufactures, would operate in any commercial city ; and the condition of the Flemish settlements formerly in England and elsewhere, may, perhaps, not unfitly illustrate the way, in which the harmless, unoffending sect of primitive Christians became the marks of general hatred. With such a feeling, persecution would be raised, not professing the source from which it sprang, but sheltering its selfish origin under various honest pretexts. Demetrius and the craftsmen would act from a sense of interest, but would appeal to a sense of religion ; and hence, Christians would not only be branded as “atheists,” but all sorts of crimes and foul practices would be attributed to them, in order to furnish motives in which men could sympathize, instead of the interested feelings from which the instigators themselves either altogether or originally acted. No wonder that the heathen historian should be found speaking of them with a disgust which would be felt for Bacchanalian associations ; or that it should be whispered at Rome, that all kinds of abomination were practised in those meetings, which having been secret originally from fear, continued to be secret from custom.



It has been questioned by modern authorities, whether this first persecution extended beyond Rome, as was once commonly asserted; and doubtless the strongest historical testimony in support of this assertion does not appear to be authentic. The famous Spanish or Portuguese inscription, which is given by Gruter in his *Inscription. Roman. Corpus*<sup>k</sup>, has been justly suspected by Scaliger and others. Independently of the objections urged against it by those writers, it may be observed, that no native of Spain and Portugal reports it on his own authority. It professes to commemorate Nero's glory, for freeing the province from robbers; and also "for cleansing the province of those who were infecting the human race with a new superstition." This, if authentic, would decide the question; but the denial of its authenticity leaves the fact not *contradicted*, but only *less certain*. It seems, indeed, highly probable that the persecution was general. It was long currently believed to be so; and nothing is more likely, with the existence of prejudices such as have been described, and which only lay smothered and dormant in a large portion of every community, than that the erection of an inquisitorial tribunal at Rome would be imitated, by the nearer provinces at least; under the pretence of a general conspiracy, a harbouring of fugitives, or whatever other pleas there might

<sup>k</sup> Tom. i. p. 238. Mosheim de Rebus Christ. ante Const. Magn. p. 109.

be, such as always suggest themselves on similar occasions.

The continuance of this persecution through a space of four years renders it still more probable that it was general; and although the legends which have been handed down in the several Churches of Spain and Italy—especially of Lucca, Pisa, Aquileia, and Rome—concerning the martyrdom of their respective saints, are doubtless fabulous; yet that circumstance scarcely contradicts the general statement. It appears to have been in the last of these four years when the persecution closed, only because of Nero's death, that the great apostle of the Gentiles suffered. He is said to have been beheaded. About the same time also, St. Peter is asserted to have been crucified, according to the prediction of his blessed Master<sup>1</sup>. There is, however, some difficulty in reconciling this statement with the established chronology.

<sup>1</sup> John xxi. 18, 19.



THE  
HISTORY

OF THE

RISE AND EARLY PROGRESS

OF

CHRISTIANITY,

COMPRISING

AN INQUIRY INTO ITS TRUE CHARACTER AND DESIGN.

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BY THE

REV. SAMUEL HINDS, M. A.

OF QUEEN'S COLLEGE, AND VICE-PRINCIPAL OF ST. ALBAN'S HALL,  
OXFORD.

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VOL. II.

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LONDON:

PRINTED FOR BALDWIN AND CRADOCK;

C. AND J. RIVINGTON; J. DUNCAN; E. HODGSON; SUTTABY, FOX, AND  
SUTTABY; B. FELLOWES; J. DOWDING; H. T. HODGSON; LAYCOCK  
AND SON; G. LAWFORD; AND J. FRASER:

ALSO FOR J. PARKER, OXFORD: AND J. AND J. J. DEIGHTON, CAMBRIDGE.

1828.

THE END OF THE WORLD



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A  
HISTORY  
OF THE  
RISE AND EARLY PROGRESS  
OF  
CHRISTIANITY.

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PART II. CONTINUED.

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CHAP. IX.

MINISTRY OF ST. PETER, ST. JAMES, AND THE OTHER  
APOSTLES, AND THEIR COADJUTORS.

THUS far I have attempted to follow the sacred narrative in tracing the course of the Holy Spirit's dispensation through its several successive stages—through the period when the Gospel was preached to the Jews only,—through that during which it was preached to Jews and devout Gentiles,—through that, again, when an especial commission was in force to declare it to the idolaters also. In conformity, likewise, with that which appears to have been the design of the sacred narrative, I have thus far confined my notice to the main line of its progress: only touching on the ministry of the agents



of the blessed Comforter, as they were in succession called on to throw open the way wider and wider ; and taking no note of the acts and fortunes of the rest. But we are now approaching near to the period when, by the destruction of Jerusalem, the first blow was given to all distinction between Jew and Gentile, and between the proselytes of the gate and the idolatrous heathen ; that is, when all distinction of ministry and of teachers was removed, and the unity of the Church completed.

Before we quit then the last stage of the mystery of godliness, it will be neither useless nor uninteresting to pause, and inquire into the labours and the fate of those other holy men, from whom we have gradually parted, in pursuing with St. Paul the course of Gentile ministry. Not that much authentic information, beyond what has been given, can be laid before the reader, respecting either him or any other of the apostles and inspired ministers of the Gospel. Not only are the notices of them in the Acts so scanty as to furnish no materials for a narrative ; but the greater part have left behind them no epistolary or other monuments ; which, as in the case of St. Paul, might have served to confirm or to refute, to complete or to illustrate, the imperfect and uncertain accounts given by uninspired writers. St. John, St. James, St. Peter, and St. Jude, each have left something ; but in each case their writings are insignificant, if considered as a source whence to glean biographical notices. Eusebius's account is

brief, and yet it contains nearly all besides that can be relied on. So silently did the apostles proceed in their mighty task of building up the Church, and so truly did the kingdom of God come upon men “without observation <sup>a</sup>.”

*St. Peter.*

St. Peter, as we have seen, was, by a special revelation, no less than St. Paul, called from the common ministry of all the apostles to preach the Gospel to the devout Gentiles also <sup>b</sup>. After the conversion of Cornelius little can be gleaned from the Scriptures respecting his progress and success. The address of his Epistle “to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia,” marks so far the direction of his journeys. The date also shews that Rome had likewise been the scene of his labours <sup>c</sup>. Agreeably to the view already given of his call and special appointment, there will be no difficulty in determining who were

<sup>a</sup> Luke xvii. 20.

<sup>b</sup> Acts x. 9.

<sup>c</sup> That is, if we suppose, as there is much reason for doing, that Rome is designated by the term Babylon. See Tertulian's remarks on the use of this figurative mode of writing in Scripture. Adv. Judæos, c. 9. The Babylon of St. John is one of the instances selected. Sic et Babylon apud Joannem nostrum, Romanæ urbis figura est. See also Adv. Marcion, lib. iii. c. 13. From 1 and 2 Cor. it seems St. Peter had been at Corinth also.

“ the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, &c.” the special objects of his care. That they could not be Jews, as some have hastily asserted, is clear, from the term “ strangers.” The specific appellation of “ elect” also, which appears in the opening of the Epistle, tends further to prove, that those addressed were Gentiles, that is, devout Gentiles—proselytes of the gate—St. Peter’s especial charge. That term, it is true, most properly belonged to the Jews, they being originally the *chosen* and *elect* people of God ; but it was to shew the world that such privilege and distinction was now cancelled, that the apostles more frequently apply it to the Gentiles. In this mode of applying it to the latter, they generally add, by way of explanation, that they were “ elect according to the foreknowledge of God <sup>d</sup>,” “ predestined,” &c. which was as much as to say, We address you as the elect of God—You are the elect as really as the Jews ; and this not from any *change* in God’s unchangeable purposes, which the bigoted adversary may suggest to refute your claim, but it was so intended from the beginning of the world. God, of course, must and did foreknow and design what has now come to pass. “ Whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that He might be the first-born among *many* brethren. Moreover whom He did predestinate, them He also called :

<sup>d</sup> 1 Peter i. 2.

and whom He called, them He also justified: and whom He justified, them He also glorified<sup>e</sup>." Now the addition of this expression relating to God's foreknowledge, which St. Peter makes to the term elect, fixes at once the Gentiles, or some portion of them, to be the persons intended. But the body of the Epistle explains the word strangers more expressly. *E. g.* "But ye are a *chosen* generation, a *royal priesthood*, an *holy nation*, a *peculiar people*, that ye should shew forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light. Which in time past *were not a people*, but are now *the people of God*; which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy. Dearly beloved, as strangers and pilgrims abstain," &c.<sup>f</sup> In this passage, the term "elect," which is obviously characteristic of the Jewish people considered as the original "elect," is transferred to these converts, in order to denote that they were now equally so.

In the performance of his ministry, St. Peter is represented by the early writers as the most active and influential of the apostles<sup>g</sup>, which well agrees with the ardent character left of him in the Gospels. But as to the details of that ministry, it would be as unprofitable as it is vain, to attempt to separate

<sup>e</sup> Rom. viii. 29, 30.

<sup>f</sup> I Peter ii. 9, 10, 11.

<sup>g</sup> Eusebii Hist. lib. ii. c. 14. Τὸν ἀρετῆς ὄντα τῶν λοιπῶν ἀπαντῶν προήγορον. The historian might here mean however that Peter was the first employed in the work of conversion, and then his ἀρετὴ was his faith in confessing Christ, which was so rewarded.

what is palpably false from what is probable or possible. Much is said concerning his disputes with Simon Magus, his victory over that renowned magician, and the various occasions in which the apostle's activity prevented the growth of those wild theological fancies, which the artful impostor was disseminating, from his native country Samaria even to Rome<sup>h</sup>. Some of this must be authentic, else it would hardly be so unhesitatingly sanctioned by Eusebius. On the other hand, so much ground is there for suspicion in every point, that many have plausibly doubted whether St. Peter ever visited Rome at all. The time of his being there, and the period of his martyrdom, are, of course, by no means easy points to be settled. It would seem on the whole most probable that he accompanied Paul in his last apostolical journey to Rome. For this there would be much reason. The apostle to the idolatrous Gentiles had, ever since his open declaration at Jerusalem, become peculiarly odious to all the judaizing party ; so much so, that he could hardly hope for success in his ministry amongst them. It would seem but natural prudence in him to have abstained from addressing the Jews, and, perhaps, even the proselytes of the gate ; lest he should again expose himself to the accusation of seducing them from the law of Moses altogether, and thus raise some uproar, which, at Rome especially, would have sorely impeded his

<sup>h</sup> Clementis Recognitiones, lib. iii. c. 63, 69.



work. What more likely than that, under these circumstances, Peter should become his companion; and should undertake the ministry of the circumcision, and of those allied to the Jews by partial proselytism, while Paul confined his labours to the converts from idolatry? It is indeed not very improbable that this was the apostle's second visit to Rome. It is asserted by Eusebius, that he followed Simon Magus thither during the reign of Claudius<sup>1</sup>. Now, considering how St. Paul was at that time circumstanced with respect to the Jewish part of the Church, the presence of another apostle at Rome, for their sake especially, is likely to have been even then peculiarly requisite. The occasion then may be allowed to support not a little the assertion of the historian. Peter might on this account have come to Rome about the period of Paul's release; and if so, in attributing the foundation of the Church of Rome to St. Peter, the papists may not be wholly in the wrong. That Church, like almost all the other primitive Churches, was composed of three distinct classes of converts; those who had been Jews, those who had been devout Gentiles, and those who had been idolaters. The foundation of the Church at Rome among the first two might have been the work of Peter, as its establishment among the last evidently was the work of Paul. With this too agrees the assertion of an old ecclesiastical

<sup>1</sup> Eusebii Hist. lib. ii. c. 13.



writer<sup>k</sup>, quoted by Eusebius, that they were joint founders.

Peter's martyrdom took place at Rome during the Neronian persecution; and is said to have been embittered by the execution of his wife before his eyes<sup>l</sup>.

Many works were circulated among the early Christians under St. Peter's name, of which the two Epistles preserved in our Canon alone appear to have been genuine<sup>m</sup>. Of these the former was always admitted as canonical: but the latter appears, from some accidental circumstances, not to have been so early acknowledged by the whole Church. Of the spurious works, his so called Gospel was the most celebrated<sup>n</sup>.

*St. James the Less.*

James the Less, as he has been styled to distinguish him from the son of Zebedee, was a kinsman of our Lord. Notwithstanding this connection, he was of all the apostles the least odious to the Jews. It was, probably, before his conversion that he acquired the popular title of the *Just*, but he continued to enjoy it even until his death.

<sup>k</sup> Caius.

<sup>l</sup> Eusebii Hist. lib. ii. c. 30.

<sup>m</sup> Ibid. lib. iii. c. 3.

<sup>n</sup> Ibid. lib. vi. c. 12. see also the extracts from it in Jones's Script. Canon. part iii. c. 31.

Concerning his ministry Scripture contains but little. By ecclesiastical writers he is said to have been the first Bishop of Jerusalem; and the narrative of the Acts<sup>p</sup> alone would lead us to suppose that he had some especial jurisdiction in that Church<sup>q</sup>. While the rest of the apostles dispersed themselves abroad, none would be so likely to preserve peace at Jerusalem as he whom the unbelievers themselves honoured as James the Just. Eventually his popularity may have occasioned his martyrdom. Festus, who had succeeded Felix in the government of Judæa, died very soon after Paul's appeal and departure to Rome. The Jews took the opportunity of satiating their disappointed vengeance on the Christians who remained. The Feast of the Passover came, and numbers, as usual, attended. The occasion seemed a fit one for exposing the whole body of Christians to the fury of the mixed multitude of Jews assembled from all parts. To effect this, it was proposed that James should be prevailed on, either by threats or persuasions, to ascend a conspicuous part of the temple, and there publicly to make a disavowal of Christ as the Messiah. Deserted by their bishop and their most respected apostle,

<sup>p</sup> Acts xv. 13.

<sup>q</sup> In St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians there is an apparent allusion to it. Speaking of "certain who came from the Church at Jerusalem," he describes them as "coming from James." Galat. ii. 12.

the Christians would have seemed thus most likely to be ruined. James consented. On the appointed day he presented himself from the upper part of the temple to the crowds below, and in that situation was addressed, by the conspirators, with the fatal question. "Why asketh thou me," he replied, "about Jesus the Son of Man, whose abode is on the right hand of the power on high, and who is coming himself hereafter in the clouds of heaven?" The infuriated zealots perceiving that their scheme was likely to end in a contrary impression on the multitude, to that which they had designed, rushed up and cast him headlong. His fall disabled him, and he was immediately assailed with stones. Strength enough was yet left him to imitate his dying Lord, and to pray aloud for the forgiveness of his murderers. A priest who was looking on, was so affected at hearing him, that he made an attempt to save him; but before he could effect his purpose, the apostle received a blow from a club, which ended his sufferings.

Of all the atrocities which the Jews from time to time committed, or caused to be committed, against the Christians, this alone seems to have been regarded by them with remorse and horror. Their historian, who was apparently no friend to Christianity, remarks, that the siege and destruction of Jerusalem was long afterwards currently spoken of as a visitation of God for this crime more especially.

One Epistle is all which has been preserved of James's scriptural labours. For no other reason, as far as can be ascertained, than because it had not been so frequently alluded to as the generality of Scripture, by the writers immediately succeeding the apostolic age, it, at one period, laboured under some suspicion. Its authenticity is nevertheless unquestionable. It is addressed to *the Jews in the dispersion*, an expression which, by its obvious contrast to that of strangers in the dispersion, confirms the interpretation assigned to this latter in the catholic Epistle of St. Peter.

*St. James the brother of John.*

The martyrdom of St. James is noticed in the narrative of the Acts. It is there simply stated, that Herod put forth his hands to afflict the Church, and slew James the brother of John with the sword<sup>r</sup>. Uninspired history furnishes little in addition to this account. All that Eusebius has thought worthy of retaining is, that his accuser became his convert and fellow-sufferer; in the course of his trial was convinced of his victim's innocence, and the truth of his doctrine; and, by openly expressing that conviction, was included in the sentence of death passed on him.

<sup>r</sup> Acts xii. 1, 2.

*St. Andrew.*

Andrew is said to have selected Scythia for the scene of his labours, but with what success we have no authentic testimony either of ancient history or of modern researches.

*St. Thomas.*

Parthia is named as the district allotted to Thomas. Tradition has further ascribed to him the foundation of those interesting Churches in the East, known by the name of the “Christians of St. Thomas.” Some have, however, disputed the truth of this account, and suppose the Thomas from whom they derive this name to have been a bishop, who lived some centuries subsequent to the apostolical era.

*St. Jude, also called Lebbæus, and Thaddæus<sup>s</sup>.*

Among the incidents recorded of St. Thomas is one, that he was inspired to send Thaddæus the apostle to Edessa for the cure and baptism of Abgarus. The circumstance of his being sent by Thomas alone, seems strong against the identity of

<sup>s</sup> It seems probable that the two latter names were applied to him during our Lord’s lifetime, in order to distinguish him from Judas the traitor.

the Thaddæus who preached at Edessa, and the apostle who was also called Jude. This tradition, however, whether true or false, is nearly all (besides his Epistle) which we know of his history. The authenticity of the Epistle itself, too, was subject for a time to suspicion ; which gradually cleared up, as a freer intercourse between the several members of the Christian body caused those Scriptures which had a confined circulation to be better known, and their original history to be more certainly ascertained.

The mission to Edessa is connected with an event, the improbability of which has been generally contended for, notwithstanding the grave testimony by which the main incidents, at least, of the story are supported. It is said, that while our Lord was yet alive, the fame of his miracles spreading beyond Judæa was reported to Abgarus, king of Edessa. This prince, who was labouring under some grievous malady, sent accordingly to Jesus, to desire that he would come and heal him. His letter, and one pretended to be returned by our Lord, excusing his personal attendance, and promising to send one of his disciples to him, were long preserved in the archives of Edessa. In fulfilment of this promise, it is added, that after Christ's death Thaddæus went thither, and that his testimony was commonly appealed to for the existence of these records. Some add, that our Saviour sent also his portrait.

It is evidently somewhat suspicious, that no



notice should have been preserved of so remarkable an incident in any of the Gospel narratives. And yet this is hardly a conclusive argument, inasmuch as many things we know were omitted<sup>1</sup>; and this, however gratifying to our curiosity, cannot be considered as peculiarly important for our instruction in Christian truth, the great principle, we may presume, which guided the Evangelists in their selections. Some foundation there might be for the story, however fabulous the detail. Eusebius relates it without scruple, omitting what is the most improbable circumstance, the sending of the portrait. What more likely, after all, than that the fame of Jesus, and his healing miracles, should reach the sick prince of Edessa, and that he should send, according to the custom of the East, to bid the prophet come and heal him<sup>2</sup>? Equally probable is it, that the substance of the correspondence should be registered in the archives of Edessa, and afterwards shewn to an

<sup>1</sup> An event so important as the raising of Lazarus was omitted by the three earliest Evangelists. No doubt a reason may be suggested in the danger to which the living object of the Saviour's friendship and power might have been exposed, by calling attention to him. But other reasons, less obvious, may have occasioned the total suppression of many parts of our Lord's life. Our knowledge of his history, like our knowledge of all religious subjects, may be not the less sufficient because it is "in part."

<sup>2</sup> See the account of the king of Syria's embassy to Jerusalem, to procure assistance of Elisha for Naaman the leper. 2 Kings v.

apostle of the same Jesus ; although that correspondence may not have passed between them in the form of Epistles, but of messages. There is nothing certainly in the character of our Lord's reply which appears derogatory from, or inconsistent with, the tone and substance of his discourses <sup>x</sup>.

At the same time, it would be somewhat at variance with the strict rule of his ministry, to suppose that the correspondence was carried on with a view either of healing or converting one who was a Gentile<sup>y</sup>.

*St. Bartholomew.*

That Nathanael is the person better known as an apostle by the name of Bartholomew, may be fairly inferred from the Scripture narrative. Otherwise we can hardly understand why Bartholomew should not be numbered among the apostles by St. John, nor Nathanael by the other Evangelists ; or again, why, in relating the same event, St. John should speak of Philip and Nathanael coming together to Christ, the others of Philip and Bartholomew. It seems strange, too, that Nathanael should not have been a qualified candidate for the apostleship made vacant by Judas's death, unless he were already an apostle.

<sup>x</sup> See Appendix, [M.]

<sup>y</sup> See Horsley's Sermons on Matthew vii. 26.

Nathanael then might have been called *Bartholomew*, or the son of Tholmai, as Peter was *Barjona*, and Joses, *Barnabas*. The indiscriminate use of these names, and the gradual adoption of one to the exclusion of the other, is only what certainly occurred in the case of Barnabas<sup>z</sup>.

India is said to have been the scene of his labours, and amongst his converts there a Hebrew copy of St. Matthew's Gospel is reported to have been found, at the close of the second century, by Pantænus<sup>a</sup>.

### St. Philip.

Hierapolis was the chief abode of Philip. He is said to have been married, and the father of a large family, one of whom is mentioned as peculiarly devoted to the service of the Church, and the rest as prophetesses. If we may believe the uninspired record further, he was endued with no small portion of the power from on high, and on one occasion raised the dead. It is usual with us now to regard this, and all uninspired accounts of miracles, as more than doubtful. Yet certain it is, that the apostles were all gifted with power to work miracles; and must have needed them most to awaken the attention, and to convince the minds of those who were the least prepared for conviction from

<sup>z</sup> So also the names Matthew and Levi were applied indifferently to the Evangelist.

<sup>a</sup> Eusebii Hist. lib. v. c. 10.

reason and Scripture. It may be venturous and wrong to contend for the certainty of any one miracle contained in the traditionary records of primitive times, but it is clearly more so to maintain a system of decided dissent from all.

*St. Simon Zelotes.*

The title given to Simon, to distinguish him perhaps from Simon Peter, implies that he belonged originally to a sect of the Pharisees, whose intemperate and fanatical zeal was not the least of the many evils under which the Jews of this age laboured<sup>b</sup>. Egypt, Cyrene, and the African coast, are said to have heard the Gospel from him. Great Britain too has by some been included within the compass of his ministry, and is reported to have been the scene of his martyrdom.

*St. Barnabas.*

With the account of Barnabas's separation from Paul<sup>c</sup> ends all authentic information concerning him. Cyprus was most probably the scene of his after ministry ; or, if it extended beyond his native island, Egypt, rather than Gaul or Italy, should be the place assigned to him. All certain traces of

<sup>b</sup> Joseph. de Bello Jud. lib. iv.

<sup>c</sup> Acts xv. 39.

him, however, are entirely lost ; and it would be unnecessary to make any further mention of him, were it not for the writings which have been ascribed to him.

Of these, the catholic Epistle, generally published with the works of the apostolic Fathers, is all that still pretends to his name. Few can read it without being so sensible of its unscriptural character, as to seek no further for the external evidence against it. It is therefore by universal consent now pronounced to be a forgery. And yet there is, after all, some difficulty in understanding how it should have obtained so much credit with the early Church, if it were so decidedly spurious as we suppose it to be. It is quoted as Barnabas's by Clemens Alexandrinus ; Origen seems to sanction its spiritual authority ; and Eusebius assigns it a place in the Canon. On the other hand, in Jerome's catalogue it is classed with the apocryphal books ; and his authority is supported by the prevailing voice of antiquity.

Some ground there must be for this difference, or apparent difference, of statement. This very Epistle might have had, perhaps, for its basis a genuine work of Barnabas ; and might be the gradual corruption of impostors, who availed themselves of the acknowledged fact, that a writing containing such and such general features was the production of this apostle. Hence, although its true estimate was soon obtained, its character would be for a while variously

represented. What tends to confirm this, is the motley appearance it presents; the marked difference of style and thought between the beginning and the close, and the clumsy interpolations which scarcely affect disguise.

The only reason which can be discovered, for the conjecture of some in the early Church, that he was the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, seems to have been the concealment of the true author's name for a time, and the natural spirit of surmise to which it gave rise. St. Barnabas was named as likely to have written it, and so also were St. Luke and Clement.

### St. Matthias.

Of the calling or election of St. Matthias, mention has been already made, and beyond this nothing certain is known. Eusebius has preserved a remark on the doctrine which he preached, *viz.* that it was the same in substance with what was afterwards called the doctrine of the Nicolaitans <sup>d</sup>.

A Christian is properly enough unwilling to admit such a charge on this solitary testimony. At the same time, it must not be pronounced impossible that Matthias should become a heretic, any more than that Judas should become a traitor. On a subject of belief, we have seen Peter opposed

<sup>d</sup> Hist. lib. iii. c. 29.



to Paul ; and Paul, again, on a question of ministerial duty, opposed to Barnabas. The very gifts and endowments of the Spirit were, no doubt, liable to abuse and perversion ; and apostles, as well as all Christians, were free agents, and responsible for their use of their extraordinary talents. “ Woe unto me, if I preach not the Gospel ! ”

Perhaps, after all, St. Matthias's words were misinterpreted ; as St. Paul's and St. James's have been since.

*St. Matthew.*

That St. Matthew was the author of the Gospel which bears his name is nearly all recorded of him, beyond the scanty notices of Scripture. It was the first that was written<sup>e</sup>, although it is impossible to fix the precise date.

Whether originally composed in Hebrew, as some have asserted, or in its present Greek, is a question not material to us. The Greek, if the translation, so soon superseded the use of the Hebrew, as to be the one commonly read and quoted ; and, as such, received the sanction of inspired authority.

<sup>e</sup> Origenis Fragm. tom. i. Commentar. in Matthæum.

## St. Mark.

St. Mark's Gospel is said to have been derived from St. Peter's instructions, or at least to have received his revisal and sanction. It was compiled at the request of the Christians at Rome<sup>f</sup>; who, very naturally, employed for this work one who had been the follower both of Paul and Peter, if, as has been suggested, the original Church in that city was made up of their respective congregations. It has been remarked accordingly by many, as a striking characteristic of this Gospel, that it studiously avoids all allusions and expressions which would not be equally intelligible to Jew and Gentile, and seems carefully adapted throughout to all the classes of believers. It contains also many Latin words for which the Greek equivalents were in common use, and adopted by the other Evangelists<sup>g</sup>.

It was scarcely possible for a portion of Scripture so circumstanced as this must have been, not to have been always recognized as authentic.

Although Mark was not an apostle, yet the gifts of the Spirit were so widely diffused, that supposing him to have recorded from memory the instructions of an apostle, the *prohibitory impressions* of the Holy Spirit, (the character of which has been already

<sup>f</sup> Euseb. Hist. lib. ii. c. 15.

<sup>g</sup> Inter al. *κιντουρίων* for *ἐκατόνταχης*.

pointed out, and which there is no ground for appropriating to the apostolic order,) would have been sufficient to secure him from error. It is indeed asserted, that his and St. Luke's history were finally revised, at least, the one by St. Peter, the other by St. Paul. But, after all, our belief in its inspired character rests on the judgment of the primitive Church; which was most competent to decide, whether a Gospel written by such an author, and under such circumstances, was or was not of divine authority.

If St. Mark's Gospel received the revision of St. Peter, it could not have been written later than A. D. 66 or 67, the period of his imprisonment and martyrdom at Rome.

*St. Luke.*

St. Luke's Gospel, like that of St. Mark, could not have been published on his own authority, because neither was he an apostle. Nevertheless, in his narrative of the Acts he was particularly qualified for the office of historian; because he was an eye-witness, and bore part in most of the scenes which he describes<sup>b</sup>. For the remainder too, and for the Gospel history, there could be no surer guide than St. Paul, with whose preaching he was so long familiar<sup>i</sup>.

<sup>b</sup> Acts i. 1. xvi. 10—18. xx. 5, 6. xxi. 1—18.

<sup>i</sup> Hieronymi Proœm. in Matth.

As was observed of St. Mark's Gospel, a portion of Scripture so written has not less claim to *inspiration*, than the work of an apostle or prophet delivering an immediate revelation from God. For the true notion of *inspiration*, even in the latter case, is not that the sacred penman *was inspired while in the act of writing*; but that he wrote *what he had beforehand received by extraordinary revelation*. It would be impossible else to account for the variety of style and thought, the occasional introduction of matter foreign to revelation, and whatever else belongs to such writings in common with all mere human compositions. The contrast between the true Scripture and the pretended records of revelation, in this respect, has been already noticed. Between Luke's writing what he had heard from Paul, and Paul's writing what he had received from God, the only difference could be, the difference between them as authors; the difference of style, of manner, and of the other accidents as it were of authorship. If in writing, or in preaching, St. Paul's memory had *misled* him, some check from the Holy Spirit would have guided him back to the truth. Now Luke, like all who preached the Gospel, must in his preaching have enjoyed the same preservative aid, and why not in writing also? Had any necessary portion of Christian instruction *escaped* St. Paul's memory, the Holy Spirit then would have called it to his remembrance; for such

was our Lord's promise to the apostles. But if this promise did not extend to others, if Luke's *omissions* were not miraculously supplied, Paul was at hand to supply them. Granting the possible omission too of any necessary point; this would not, like a false statement, be inconsistent with the inspired character of any one Scripture, inasmuch as the record of the Gospel is not one but many<sup>1</sup>.

St. Luke's Gospel appears to have always passed for his; and although the Acts have not likewise his name attached, yet the internal evidence, and the voice of the early Church, certainly declare him to be the author.

That the Epistle to the Hebrews should have been ascribed to one, whose writings had been the vehicle of so much of St. Paul's instruction, is nothing wonderful. At the time when the author's name was studiously kept a secret from the public, the tone of Luke's conversation, and his very expressions perhaps in some instances being derived from St. Paul, naturally might have fixed on him the uncertain authorship. And if St. Paul desired concealment, St. Luke would be the less likely to be forward in disclaiming the Epistle; lest he should, by so doing, direct surmise towards the right person.

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix, [M.]

It has been very reasonably conjectured, that his Gospel was somewhat prior to that of Mark.

## St. John.

St. John was the last of the apostles ; with him therefore, and with the period through which his life and miracles extended, we may consider the second great era of Christianity to close—the era when it was preached by inspired ministers. For although no one can undertake to prove that miracles were not performed long subsequently, yet the main system of Christianity was conducted thenceforth by ordinary means and ordinary agents. After St. John, there was no one endowed with that most distinguishing power of an apostle, the power of *communicating* the gifts of the Spirit.

A life which was prolonged, no doubt providentially, to the close almost of the first century, and which consequently embraces more than sixty years of the most interesting period of our religion, may be expected to furnish an eventful record. But such is not the case. To the acts of St. John belong the same character as to those of the rest of the apostles ; they are only known by their results. Whether in this veil of oblivion, which has been allowed to conceal their glorious exertions from our view, there be any thing like a design of Providence perceptible, the pious Christian may be allowed to consider. Perhaps



he may find in it a merciful removal of a temptation to view the work in which they were engaged as the result of human virtue, more than of divine power extraordinarily exercised. Contemplating the propagation of religion at this distance, with the earthly and mortal instruments employed by the Spirit removed from the scene, we are led more directly to trace it to its source, and to see it in the light in which St. Paul warns his own converts and us to view it; as the work not of himself or of his fellow-labourers, but of God who was working in them.

It may not a little confirm this estimate of the matter, and teach us to distrust our untried hearts on this score, to recollect that the want of an authentic account of all the labours and sufferings of the apostles, and early ministers of the Gospel, has been supplied by a series of legendary tales, which, even without proof or likelihood to recommend them, have actually produced the evil supposed. If the trust of so large a portion of Christians for so many ages has been withdrawn from God to his ministers, from the Lord Jesus to his saints; and the prop of that trust has been the boasted legends of miracles wrought, and other divine manifestations; how much greater would have been the hold on men's minds made by such a superstition, had these legends been superseded by accounts not less marvellous, but more authentic!

The history of St. John, like that of the others, abounds with these legends. At one time, we are told, that he escaped unharmed from a cauldron of boiling oil ; at another, he is described as the hero of a romantic adventure among a band of robbers, whose chieftain he reclaimed and led away triumphantly. As was before observed, it would indeed be presumptuous to say of all these occurrences, or of any in particular, that they must be false, either because they are marvellous, or because they are not equally attested with the miracles of the Scriptures. Much of the marvellous must doubtless have occurred in the unsubstantiated ministry of the apostles ; and the lesson to be learnt from the removal of inspired testimony to those divine interpositions, is not certainly that of universal and dogmatic disbelief. These events *may be* true. Our duty only is, not to mix them indiscriminately with those which bear the seal of the Spirit affixed ; for whatever reason that mark of distinction may have been given. Let the reader of the lives of the apostles and their inspired contemporaries, read such facts as the escape of St. John from the cauldron, not as in themselves improbable ; but to be received or rejected as any other portion of history would be, according to the character of the historian, and the source of his information. At the same time, whatever degree of probability attaches to them, let him read their record with the

full impression, that these the Holy Spirit has passed by without setting his seal thereon. Our divine guide meant not to make the same use of them, as of Scripture miracles. Whatever the facts were to those of old time, to us they are no objects of faith; none of the appointed evidence of our religion; subjects for curious and learned inquiry, perhaps, but not for holy meditation—they are not in the Bible, and must not be added thereto.

St. John's life, divested of these, affords his biographer but a scanty supply of materials. He has left with the Church two Epistles, and a book of Revelations, relating, as it would seem, to the history of the Church, traced through its successive stages. From these and from ecclesiastical history it appears, that the latter portion, at least, of his ministry, was employed in Asia Minor, especially in the famous seven cities. As both St. Peter's and St. Paul's course embraced this district, it was after their martyrdom, probably, that he undertook the superintendence of these celebrated Churches. With the destruction of Jerusalem, and the dissolution of the Jewish polity, all distinction between the various classes of Christian converts ceased. There was henceforth no longer any peculiar law, or any peculiar apostle, for Jew, or for proselyte, or for idolatrous convert. St. John would thenceforth as properly attach himself to the flock of St. Paul, as to that of St. Peter. Of his former

ministry there is no trace, beyond the slight notices contained in the early part of the Acts. From this time, however, he appears to have been fixed in Asia Minor, and to have made Ephesus especially his place of residence. Over the seven Churches of Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia, and Laodicea, bishops appear to have exercised authority; subject to that extraordinary and peculiar control, assumed by the apostles for the better foundation of the Church, but obviously designed to cease with the removal of the apostolic order. Hence the charge from the Lord Jesus, through his aged servant to these bishops, is not as to men under authority, but as to those which whom the supreme government and chief responsibility was left,—a charge given when the last temporary prop of the holy edifice was about to be removed, and the building was now considered complete and stable.

The book of Revelations, which contains this charge, was written in the island of Patmos, whither John had been banished from Asia Minor in the persecution of Domitian. It was during his abode there, probably, that he also wrote his Epistles; if indeed the first be not more properly a treatise or pastoral discourse. On Domitian's death he was restored to his residence at Ephesus, and died there at the advanced age of ninety-six. Few historical pictures are more pleasing, than that of the old man

in his latter days, joining the Christian assemblies, in despite of age and feebleness, and always leaving behind him the same brief and simple precept, “ Little children, love one another.”

It was during the latter part of his life, either whilst he was in Patmos, or after his recal from banishment, that he composed his Gospel. He had at that time seen and approved the narratives of Matthew, Mark, and Luke<sup>o</sup>; and his testimony to these at that advanced period of the Church’s growth, is doubtless one cause of thankfulness from all ages, to Him who permitted him to tarry thus long<sup>p</sup>. His reasons for adding yet another Gospel are said to have been, first, to supply the omissions of the former Evangelists on some points of our Lord’s history; next, to counteract the heretical opinions that were now springing up concerning Christ’s nature. What those opinions were, and whence their origin, will be considered in the sequel.

As to the Gospel itself, it has been universally received by the Church in all ages; although the stubborn testimony it contains to the divine character of Jesus, has naturally made it an object of cavil and of misrepresentation to many. Of the authenticity of the Revelations and of the Second and Third Epistles, some doubts were once entertained; which, as in the case of other Scriptures

<sup>o</sup> Eusebii Hist. lib. iii. c. 24.

<sup>p</sup> John xxi. 22.



in our Canon labouring under the same imputation, were removed, when the communication between the different parts of the Christian world became such, as to enable these doubts to be sifted and duly estimated <sup>q</sup>.

*Philip the deacon, Timothy, Titus, and other coadjutors of the Apostles.*

Besides the two Evangelists, Mark and Luke, there are others whose names are recorded, as having received gifts through the apostles, or as being otherwise divinely appointed to be their fellow labourers. Of these, few can be traced beyond the scenes in which they are briefly introduced in the sacred writings. Philip the deacon's history has been much confounded with that of the apostle of the same name; and contains nothing which merits the labour of unravelling the entangled materials. Timothy and Titus deserve more notice; but only on account of the appointment with which we find them invested by St. Paul, and in which

<sup>q</sup> Of those who in modern times have questioned the authenticity and inspiration of the book of Revelations, Less and Michaelis are the most distinguished. Dean Woodhouse's Review of the Evidence, in reply to the objections of the latter, should be carefully examined by all who wish to have a satisfactory view of the question. See Woodhouse's Annotations on the Apocalypse.



they continued to be recognized by all the early authorities of the Church. Timothy was made by the apostle bishop of Ephesus, and Titus, bishop of Crete.

In St. Paul's Epistles to them, some light is accidentally thrown on two important and interesting questions relating to their office, now the highest in the Church: the first, By what authority were these bishops (the first of their order as far as we can learn) created? the second, What was the form observed?

Both these questions may be resolved by that single verse of the Epistle to Timothy, in which Paul exhorts him, "neglect not the gift that is in thee which was given thee by prophecy, with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery<sup>r</sup>."

From these words the appointment may certainly be inferred to have taken place in consequence of some *extraordinary divine* command. It was "by prophecy;" or, as it is elsewhere expressed, "according to the prophecies which went before on thee<sup>s</sup>." As the Holy Ghost bade the Church of Antioch separate Paul and Barnabas for their apostolic appointment, so, it is implied, that Timothy was separated by divine command for the episcopal appointment.

That even in the appointment of presbyters such an express revelation of the divine choice may have

<sup>r</sup> 1 Timothy iv. 14.

<sup>s</sup> 1 Timothy i. 18.

taken place, is not improbable, from St. Paul's remark on the Ephesian presbyters, that "the Holy Ghost had made them overseers<sup>t</sup>." In the case of the bishops, at all events, it can scarcely admit of a doubt. The sacred testimony requires no support; but it gives us some additional assurance that we are not mistaking its meaning, when we find the earliest Christian documents of the uninspired Church speaking in the same strain. Clement of Rome, in his Epistle to the Corinthians, states it as the custom of the apostles "to make trial by the Spirit," that is, by the "power of discerning," in order to determine who were to be overseers, and deacons in the several Churches they planted. Clement of Alexandria speaks particularly of the Churches in the neighbourhood of Ephesus, the overseers of which he understood to have been marked out for ordination, by the Holy Ghost, to St. John.

At the same time, although the episcopal ordination rested on authority similar to that on which the apostles themselves were invested with their office, yet there is ample evidence that this new class of ministers was distinct from the apostolical. Throughout the Epistles to Timothy and Titus all their information and instruction are said to be derived from the apostles. They had no revelations.

<sup>t</sup> Acts xx. 28.

Their heavenly *gift* (χάρισμα) was doubtless of the same character and import as that communicated to all believers at baptism,—communicated in like manner, and for the same purpose. It was to *testify* to the ordained, and to all others, that the appointment was divine—that the bishop was duly ordained—was an official minister of the Holy Ghost ; and that his official acts would therefore be valid and effectual.

The next question relates to the form. The only ceremony recorded is that which was used in many solemn acts, *viz.* the laying on of hands. It was the form whereby the apostles gave the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost ; and as these extraordinary gifts were not only ministerial instruments, as, *e. g.* the gift of interpretation, but also signs of some invisible agency or sanction, these forms are still observed, although the sign of confirmation is no longer granted by the divine Dispenser.

But then, the ceremony of laying on of hands is here said to have been performed by the presbyters, while in the Second Epistle to Timothy Paul asserts it to have been performed by himself. From which the conclusion is clear, that although the “ gift ” which testified the appointment might have depended on the efficacy of the apostles joining in the ceremony, yet that the ceremony had a further intent ; else why should the whole presbytery join ? It was then the act of the Church,

with whom was vested the ordination of bishops ; in like manner as the Church was before made formally to ordain the two extraordinary apostles to the Gentiles. By the Church, as was before explained, is meant the representatives of the Church ; whether, as in the case of the ordination of Paul and Barnabas at Antioch, these were presbyters alone, or, as in that of Timothy, there was one superior to the presbyters also. Accordingly, in tracing back the annals of episcopacy, we find the custom scrupulously observed, and the bishop and the presbyters uniting in the laying on of hands. Occasional mention is made of the ceremony being performed by the bishop alone, probably considered as the president of the presbyterian body ; but never of the presbytery without their head.

It is quite clear then that the ordination of ministers rests with the Church as one of its rights ; we should rather say, one of its *duties* ; for these are not matters of endowment, but of obedience. But then, with whom was the appointment left ? The Holy Ghost was here, as it would seem, in all instances the sole guide. For, although Timothy was left with power to ordain, yet he had a special gift attending his appointment ; and what more appropriate than the gift of discerning spirits, which in its application would be nearly equivalent to a divine revelation of the Holy Ghost's choice ? This then was probably the last kind of extraordinary assist-

ance which was withdrawn from the Church ; and, when withdrawn, the mode in which the other aids had been gradually and successively supplied by human means, became an obvious rule in this case also. For revelation, they had a record ; human eloquence and learning continued what inspired wisdom and knowledge and utterance had commenced ; the attested account of signs and wonders was operating in like manner as had the miracles themselves. Each extraordinary support had served not only as a substitute, but also as temporary shelter and protection for some natural power, which was allowed to grow up under its shade, and to attain proper maturity, before the occasional fence was removed. To the Church the Holy Ghost was wont to specify his appointments ; and when that voice was no longer given, the Church felt sure that it was called on to act, just as individuals in office had been, who no longer found themselves prompted by the gift of wisdom, or knowledge, or eloquence. It employed all its natural powers in choosing those on whom it thought the inspired choice would have fallen. Its *office*—its *duty*—remained, although all miraculous aid was withdrawn ; just as the duty of those individuals who filled any office in the Church, continued, although no extraordinary help was perpetuated together with the office. The other substitutes of inspiration had proved effectual, and the exercise of natural judgment could not but be expected to prove so in this

case also. When the preacher or the interpreter used his natural learning or eloquence, his success assured him that God had sanctioned this new mode of ministry ; and, by analogy, the Church, when left to itself, knew that its appointments, if made according to the best human judgment, would be sanctioned and approved by Heaven.





## CHAP. X.

### CHRISTIAN UNITY.

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SCHISM and Heresy, considered merely as ecclesiastical crimes, may be illustrated by the analogous case of political crimes. The schismatic renounces his allegiance to the ecclesiastical government under which he has been living ; the heretic adopts practices and opinions contrary to its laws. The schismatic therefore is, as it were, in rebellion against his Church ; the heretic, a violater of its laws<sup>u</sup>.

Here, however, the analogy ceases. Christ's kingdom is not of this world. Accordingly, while the rightful punishment of the rebel who is found arrayed against his country and its government is inflicted by the society injured ; the schismatic, who is similarly opposed to his Church, is reserved for a sentence hereafter,—a sentence either of acquittal or condemnation, as the motives which gave rise to the rebellious act shall be found sufficient or otherwise.

The infallibility of the Church's rulers in the apo-

<sup>u</sup> I do not know whether this distinction in the use of the terms schism and heresy obtains generally ; and heresy undoubtedly, in its original acceptation, meant a schism or sect. So the term is used in Acts xxiv. 5, 14. But as the two meanings require to be clearly kept apart, it is at least convenient to appropriate one to each *term*.

stolic age might be supposed sufficient to have preserved unanimity throughout the Christian world. But this was by no means the case. Previous however to the notice of those who have been charged with schism or heresy, it may be requisite to make a few remarks on the subject of Christian Unity. Few points have been less satisfactorily discussed than the exact import of this word, nor would it be easy to remove all the difficulty with which the question is encumbered. The following observations however may, it is hoped, tend to clearer views on the subject.

When Christian Unity is spoken of in the New Testament, it generally means the unity of dispensation for the various classes of converts. It is expressive of the great principle, that all were to be “one fold under one Shepherd;” that, contrary to the Jewish prejudice, Christianity was to be one and the same, as to all its benefits and privileges, for Jews, devout Gentiles, and idolaters, who embraced it. Hence it is called “the unity of *the Spirit*,” in opposition to the character of the Jewish dispensation, which was partially allotted, and shaded off, as it were, from native Jew to the proselyte of righteousness, and, in a lower degree still, to the proselyte of the gate. Hence, also, it is said to be preserved “in the bond of peace<sup>y</sup>,” because the main ground of irritation and enmity on religious

\* Eph. iv. 3.

y Ibid.

matters was the jealousy of the Jews respecting the oneness (*ἐνότης*) of God's Church. That such is the unity so often recommended, may be proved especially from Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians; in which he enforces it as a duty of Christians, *on the ground* that they partake of "one faith, one baptism," &c.<sup>2</sup> which he could not have done, if difference of faith in general or of forms were the departure from the unity intended.

Against this unity then, neither schism nor heresy is necessarily an offence. Nothing, undoubtedly, was so likely to prevent schism as an equality of dispensation, which should leave all classes of converts, in every age or country, without room for jealousy and discontent; but neither schism nor heresy is properly an offence against the Church universal, but against some particular Church, and by its own members. It is true, that he who is an heretic or schismatic of one Church, may be an unfit member for many others, or for all others; and so it is with certain grievous offenders against the laws of any one political society: and we often say of such an one that he is unfit for society. But because a murderer is tolerated neither by the French nor by the English, we do not thence infer that the French and English form one political body.

On the same principle, it must be admitted, that no *Church* can be properly called either heretic

<sup>2</sup> Eph. iv. 5.

or schismatic. For Churches, being independent establishments, may indeed consult each other; but, having no one common arbitrator, if they cannot agree, the guilt of that Church which is in error is neither schism nor heresy properly, but corrupt faith,—not an ecclesiastical offence, but one between God and the corrupt Church. Accordingly, our Reformers, whilst they characterise the Romish Church as one that has *erred*, have very properly avoided the misapplication of the terms “schismatic, and heretic” to it.

Nevertheless, if a Church has been formed by the secession of members from another Church, on disagreement of principles, each seceder is both a schismatic and a heretic, because of his former connection; but the crime does not attach to the Church so formed; and accordingly is not entailed on succeeding members who naturally spring up in it. If the schism was founded in *error*, the guilt of error would always attach to it and its members; but not that of schism or heresy. On the same principle, the present King of Great Britain’s claim to the allegiance of his subjects is not affected by the question of William the Conqueror’s right to the throne formerly; nor would an American traitor stand excused, who should plead in defence of his treason, that the disunion was unjustifiable, to which the United States owe their independence.

Distinct Churches may form alliances, such as existed between the famous seven Churches of Asia.

But then, a secession from this alliance would of itself be no crime whatever. Thus, supposing the Church of Rome not to have needed any reform, still the Church of England would have been justified in renouncing its association with it, simply on the ground of expediency.

But then, what constitutes a Church? Is the boundary line political or geographical, or what? It is obvious that a mere agreement of faith and practice does not render two bodies of Christians one Church; for the Church of England and the American Episcopalian Church agree, but still are two distinct Churches. Much less can it be supposed to depend on a political or geographical boundary; except, indeed, when the Church is united with the State, and then the limits of both are by agreement the same. Even the connection between the Church founded and that from which it has been planted does not amount to this; for when Jerusalem sent forth its spiritual colonies, they consulted indeed with the mother Church, and with one another, but each was, from the very first, independent, and a Church in itself.

Shall we say then, that the principle is purely conventional? Every body of men, and every individual, falls, by birth and other circumstances, into some one Christian body; just as he does into some one political or other social body. The Church of England, for instance, if even it were deprived of the advantages which it enjoys in the



protection of the State, would be naturally perpetuated as it now is, and every secession from it would be as truly a schism, and every profession opposed to its Articles as truly a heresy. This, however, does not imply that no plea can justify the members of any Church from seceding. He who is convinced that his Church is essentially in error, is bound to secede. But, like the circumstances which may be supposed to justify the subject of any realm in renouncing his country and withdrawing his allegiance, the plea should be long, and seriously, and conscientiously weighed. In an act of schism, indeed, a cautious and painful self-examination is even more awfully important; because the temptation to the act receives no check, corresponding to that human punishment which menaces the political rebel. The schismatic makes his appeal to the tribunal of Christ. He has done a deed, the cognizance of which the Lord has reserved for Himself. Beyond the fears and hopes of other men, he looks forward to that last scene with the consciousness of a bold transgression. He has violated the Christian temple,—he has touched the holy thing; and that day only can reveal, whether, like David, he will stand excused and justified by his need, or, like Nadab and Abihu, he will be visited with a visitation beyond that of other men.

The separation between the Romish and the Protestant Churches has nothing of the character of schism or heresy in it. The Romish Church

had become the head of an ever-increasing alliance between distinct Churches ; and gradually and artfully applied to the whole body, thus formed, rules and obligations which were only applicable to the members of each separate body, considered in their relation to that body. Every secession from the alliance was accordingly branded with some epithet which properly belonged to a member seceding from some one Church, and every resumption of independence was called a violation of Unity<sup>a</sup>. Whereas the Church never was, and never was intended to be, One, in that sense of the word Unity.

It is not strictly correct, therefore, to characterise the reformation as a reform of the Church universal. The more accurate view of it, perhaps, is this. Certain confederate Churches withdrew from their ancient alliance with each other, and with the Romish Church. This they had a right to do, whether the faith and practice of any, or of all, required reform or not. In the next place, these Churches reformed, each, itself. In each,

<sup>a</sup> This was very artfully urged by Cardinal Pole in the reign of Queen Mary, when, as the Pope's Legate, he invited the English nation " to return to the sheepfold of the Church." The Greek Church, no less than the Protestant Churches, was charged by him with the guilt of violating the great Christian principle of unity ; and the decline of the one, no less than the dissensions of the others, was alleged as proof of divine interposition marking the displeasure of God. See Burnet's abridged History, book iii.

its purity of faith is a matter for which each is responsible only to the Head of all, who is Christ the Lord.

*Heretics.*

It is generally admitted, that St. John was banished by the Emperor Domitian; and the sentence makes part of what is called the Second Persecution of the Christians. Nevertheless, it can hardly be classed among the severe trials of the Church. Flavius Clemens and his wife Domitilla, members of the imperial family, are recorded amongst the victims; the former as suffering death, the latter, exile. It is however after all doubtful, whether these objects of tyrannical suspicion were charged with their real offences, or whether the imputation of "Atheism" and "Jewish manners" may not have been the cloke for gratifying some personal dislike, or allaying some personal dread, which Domitian did not choose to avow. No more were made partners of their persecution than were probably sufficient to give colour to its justice; and were it not that among these the last apostle is numbered, all mention of it might be well omitted. Such as it was, it ceased with the death of the emperor.

At this season, however, the Church began to feel the influence of a more powerful enemy perhaps than the sword of persecution. After the destruction of Jerusalem, the attempts of the unconverted Jews

to direct the civil powers of the world against Christians were few and feeble. The converted Jews had less spirit, and less shew of reason, to contend for the eternal obligation of the Mosaic law on Christians. It was no longer deemed necessary to enforce those restrictions therefore on the Jewish and proselyted converts, which before that signal event prudence had suggested. From the Jews, and from the disposition to Judaize Christians, the Church was comparatively secure. In proportion, however, as this relief was obtained, a new evil began to spring up. The unconverted Gentiles were henceforth the chief movers of calumny and accusation. It was now palpably the interest of a great body of them to be so. From a portion of the converted Gentiles too, more than from the Jew, the Gospel was threatened with corruption. It was not now so much an adulterous union between the Mosaic law and the Christian, as between Gentile philosophy and Christian truth, against which the defender of the faith had to contend. And here it might be expected, that at least the Judaizing portion of the Church would have been firm resisters of this most unnatural union,—but they were perhaps the weaker party, and were even more readily seduced than their brethren of Gentile origin. The reason was this. With the Jews of Alexandria, and, through them, very generally with the Jews of all parts, the experiment which was now to be tried on the Christians had been made, and made with eminent

success. Long before the establishment of the Eclectic sect in Egypt, the principles on which it was formed had influenced the philosophical speculations at Alexandria; and several tenets of the Greek wisdom had been admitted into the oriental schools, and still more of orientalism into those of the Grecian philosophy. Plato's system, from its fanciful assemblage of *ideas*, was the most readily identified or amalgamated with the Eastern theory of emanations. But the Peripatetic and Stoic were soon found equally pliant and yielding to the ingenuity of men once practised in the method of harmonizing and reconciling. Both, no less than the Academic, agreed indeed in the fundamental point of theology with the Eastern creed, *viz.* that the Deity was the soul of the world, or the universe itself. The Epicurean system was the most stubborn, but even this was gradually tortured, until it was made to furnish some evidence to the shifting views of these theorists. Meanwhile, in this rage for philosophic liberality, the ancient and august character of the Mosaic revelation, and the reverence with which it was observed by so large a portion of the inhabitants of Alexandria especially,—the great laboratory in which all these experimentalists were at work,—could not but tempt them to tamper with this institution also. Many of the Jews were persuaded into a notion, that part of the Gentile theories must have been portions of patriarchal revelation, and worthy of being believed and applied to.



the elucidation of the Mosaic. The infection had spread far and wide through the nation at the period of the Messiah's coming ; and many of those Jews who became converts to Christianity, carried with them into the Church the tenets and the spirit of Gnosticism. Even during the ministry of St. Paul we recognize the use of the word *gnosis*, (γνῶσις,) applied as it began to be to an *esoteric* doctrine,—a refined and cabbalistic interpretation of the Gospel—a system which in the apostle's own words was “ falsely called *gnosis* or knowledge<sup>b</sup>.” Before the close of the first century, however, the warning voice of Paul required the support of the last survivor of the apostles. The “ foolish questions” and the “ endless genealogies,” from which the former had endeavoured to divert the attention of the Christian inquirer, were becoming more and more objects of interest. Foolish questions or inquiries into the absolute nature of God, led (as they must ever lead men,) to absurdity and impiety—to those wild speculations concerning the successive generations of *Æons*,—the emanations of the Divine essence,—and all the metaphysical subtilties of orientalism, to which St. John briefly, and in the spirit of one dismissing idle discussion by a few authoritative assertions, adverts in the commencement of his Gospel.

The authors of this progressive heresy are

<sup>b</sup> 1 Tim. vi. 20. i. 4. Tit. iii. 9. Coloss. ii. 8.



stated by historians to have been Simon Magus, Menander, Dositheus, Cerinthus, and others of inferior note.

Whatever mischief, however, these may have caused to the Church, all of them cannot properly be called heretics. To begin with Simon Magus. The character of this impostor is decidedly not that of a heretic, but of an infidel and blasphemer<sup>c</sup>. Supposing him to be the same named in the Acts<sup>d</sup>, (which supposition rests on uncontradicted tradition,) he was by birth a Samaritan, who, having travelled to Egypt, came home imbued with the oriental philosophy, which he taught to his countrymen, claiming for himself the rank of Æon or superior emanation from the Deity. When Christ was preached abroad, he found no difficulty in admitting the divine authority of his mission; and merely contended that he himself was a superior Æon, who with his wife or concubine Helena had become incarnate since the Messiah. With such an object, supported by blasphemy and imposture like this, Simon was rather the first of the false Christs whom our Lord foretold, than an heretical follower. It is well known, that in order to make

<sup>c</sup> So Justin Martyr, as quoted by Eusebius, καὶ μετὰ τὴν ἀνάληψιν τοῦ κυρίου εἰς οὐρανὸν, προέβαλλον οἱ δαίμονες ἀνθρώπους τιναί, λέγοντας ἑαυτοὺς εἶναι θεούς.—Σίμωνα μὲν τινα Σαμαρεῖα, κ. τ. λ. Justin, Ap. 1. Euseb. lib. ii. c. 13.

<sup>d</sup> Acts viii. 9.

it seem that his authority was, like that of Jesus, divine, he practised magic, and performed false miracles ; nor, with this general view of his character and manners, is the story in itself improbable which historians tell of his death at Rome ; that it was occasioned by a fall, namely, in attempting to fly from the Capitol. No miracle would have been more worthy of the impostor's ambition, than that which should make him seem to the Jews to fulfil the desired sign of the Son of man descending from the clouds of heaven. Notwithstanding the glaring absurdity of his pretensions, it is no slight proof of the prevailing bias of men's minds towards the Oriental and Gnostic fancies, that he not only was attended during his life by a numerous train of adherents, but that as late as the third and even the fourth century, there continued to exist a sect, who claimed him as their founder,—still believed in his doctrine, and paid him the honours and worship due to his assumed nature. The assertion that a statue was erected to him at Rome has been doubted, and the fact ascribed to the ignorance or credulity of Justin Martyr, Tertullian, and others. The story is improbable, but the testimony is strong, because derived from so many consenting witnesses.

The next place in the list of heretics is assigned to Menander ; by some supposed to have been a disciple of Simon<sup>c</sup>. As far as any clear and plausi-

<sup>c</sup> Euseb. Hist. lib. iii. c. 26. on the authority of Justin.

ble account of him can be collected from the notices of Irenæus, Tertullian, and Justin Martyr, he has been as improperly ranked among the disciples of that famous magician, as among the Christian heretics. Like Simon, he is said to have been by birth a Samaritan, and, like Simon, to have taken advantage of the reigning taste of the times, to make himself appear to his countrymen and the world “some great one,” and “the power of God.” Thus, he might have introduced himself into notice by admitting the divine nature of Jesus, as Simon did; and even of that impostor also, reserving for himself the character of an *Æon* still nearer than either to the fountain of Deity. The doctrine of Emanations was obviously suited to the spirit of imposture, and was naturally the doctrine of each false Christ in succession. Yet was it not the prevalence of that doctrine alone which caused such numbers to submit to similar delusions one after another. This must be sought for in the universal expectation of a great deliverer, which those who were dissatisfied with the kind of deliverance offered by Jesus and his followers, continued fondly to look for. Love of novelty might account for the formation of one such sect as these; but the ready obedience of new disciples to the call of every similar pretender, could only have arisen from the fulness of the time. Menander’s talent for supporting his imposture was probably not equal to that of Simon; for he is less famous in ecclesiastical

legends, and his sect soon ceased to be noticed by historians.

Another of these impostors, whose name has been connected with the history of the early Church, is Dositheus. His life and tenets are still more obscure than those of the preceding, but his main object appears to have been the same. By some he has been made a disciple<sup>f</sup>, by others, the preceptor of Simon. Neither is likely; as far as we can trace his course, it evinced more enthusiasm than knavery, such as Simon's was; and was quickly terminated. Having failed to obtain credit with the Jews, he proclaimed himself to the Samaritans as the Messiah, and an attempt having been made by the High Priest to apprehend him, he took refuge in a cave, wherein he perished<sup>g</sup>. Still, the same cause which prolonged the existence of the Magian sect, kept alive for centuries the faith and the hopes of his party,—if, at least, from him was derived the sect of Dositheans, whose existence in Egypt as late as the sixth century is well attested<sup>h</sup>.

Of heretics, properly so named, Cerinthus was perhaps the first. By some he is said to have flourished in the beginning of the second century; but the assertions of the early writers,

<sup>f</sup> *Recognitiones Clementis*, lib. ii. c. 8.

<sup>g</sup> Epiphan. *Hæres.* xiii. lib. 1.

<sup>h</sup> Moshemii de *Reb. Christ. ante Const.* sect. i. §. 65.

that the rise of his sect was one cause of the publication of St. John's Gospel, together with the internal evidence contained in that Gospel to the fact, makes it more than probable, that his proper place in ecclesiastical record is the close of the first century. In the romantic and fabling spirit of the times, some have ventured to represent him as the great antagonist on whom the spiritual prowess of Christ's champion, St. John, was proved; as that of St. Peter had been on Simon Magus<sup>1</sup>. This may, perhaps, afford an additional ground for presuming that they were contemporary, however decidedly we reject the stories themselves.

Cerinthus was a Jew, and one of those who had deeply imbibed the tenets of Orientalism. He became a convert to Christianity, with his fancy over-excited, his judgment perplexed, and his very affections, which the Gospel was calculated to arrest and sober, so misguided by his previous habits of religious meditation, that he looked on his new system of faith with the same nervous and irritable view, with which the great arithmetician was said to perceive only number in all the variety of scenes he beheld. The visionary *pleroma*, filled with the divine essence, emanating from its source with gradually decreasing brightness, and passing thus through all nature until it was traced imperceptibly to matter, and as such losing its original character

<sup>1</sup> The legend of Cerinthus in the Bath, and the like.



of excellence, and assuming that of evil—all this haunted his mind like an enchantment; and he thought on the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, only to find their respective places in this emblazonry of fancy. In the ingenious attempts to harmonize Judaism and Orientalism, the most revolting part of the process had already settled in his mind. Much of the grosser and more offensive tenets of the Eastern Wisdom had been softened down, to effect an union with the faith of the Mosaic revelation. The Creator of the world, for instance, was no longer, as formerly, represented as an evil and opposite principle to good, but only as a subordinate *Æon*, whose work was imperfect, and now become so corrupt, that there was need of a superior *Æon* to restore it. Such an one he beheld in Christ, the Word incarnate. How far he pursued his system of adapting the various doctrines of Christianity to Philosophy is uncertain; but, doubtless, much of the Valentinian heresy, which arose immediately after, existed in his theory. Considering the spiritual and material worlds as both derived from the same origin, he supposes two classes of principles, (*δυνάμεις*,) the one active, the other passive, the one consisting of male *Æons*, the other of female. From the source of Deity, by a union with Thought or Silence, were produced successive pairs of these *Æons*, the first of which was Mind and Truth; lower in the scale, the Word, Man, and the Church; and far lower still, the Creator, whose im-



perfect power and wisdom had produced the necessity of an incarnation, and of all the Christian scheme<sup>k</sup>. From all these idle and impious fancies, engendered, as it would seem, in the full sunshine of truth, we should turn aside with little remembrance, if recorded of an individual alone ; but the attention is detained, and reason is staggered, at the record of numbers joining in a view of revelation such as this ; combining through centuries, like the successful builders of a spiritual Babel ; and so established in their creed, as to branch out into subdivisions and sects, all maintaining the great principles of Gnosticism. It is the feeling of each age, to be amazed and scandalized at the absurdity or impiety of notions worn out by time ; even while it is itself, perhaps, affording matter for the reprehension and scorn of future generations. Scarce less contempt and censure do we pass on the Gnostics of old, than did those Gnostics on the idol-worshippers, from whose impurities and vanities they had extricated themselves. On us, and on every age, the moral presses strongly and beneficially. Other prejudices, than those of a “ vain philosophy,” may betray the Christian of the nineteenth century, and of ages more enlightened still, into errors equally unworthy of the name he bears, and of the God whom he worships. Collectively as a Church, no less than as individuals, we are to the end of time

<sup>k</sup> Bruckeri Hist. Philosophiæ, tom. iii. p. 291.

in a state of trial ; and it is well to look back on these monstrous pictures of the past, if the retrospect suggests to us, that the best safeguard which we now possess, the aid of the Holy Spirit, was theirs no less than ours.

It was against the heresy of Cerinthus that St. John is said to have asserted in the beginning of his Gospel, the eternity of the Word—that the Word which was made flesh was no emanation, but was originally with God, and was God. To other features of this heresy, he is supposed occasionally to point in his writings; the whole tone of which, of the Gospel especially, indicates a design to inculcate the doctrine of Christ's real divinity, in opposition to the conclusions which were drawn from these principles of Cerinthus ; as, that he was inferior to God the Father, that he was a mere man while on the cross, and separated from the *Æon* who possessed his frame, &c. Even those, accordingly, who do not name Cerinthus and his sect as the occasion of the new Gospel by the apostle in his latter days, point to its spiritual character ; and relate that it was composed with a view to represent Christ more in his divine nature, and especially in that early part of his history, which had been hitherto chiefly occupied with his earthly birth and parentage.

If it be asked how it happened, that errors like those above described should have passed current with men accustomed to scriptural religion founded

on miraculous evidence ;—with Jews who had received the law on the testimony of Moses and his miracles ;—with Christians whose belief was grounded on a similar foundation,—the reason some have assigned is the following. The artful founders of Gnosticism, in recommending the oriental philosophy to the Jews originally, were sensible of the difficulty: they perceived that it was not enough in this case, as in the attempt to reconcile their system with that of Plato, or Aristotle, or Zeno, to make its several parts harmonize and represent those of the other. There was one ingredient wanting, which neither orientalism nor any human system of religion claimed or rested on—an ingredient peculiar to the truth, and that was, evidence. In order to supply this want, it was found expedient to challenge as authority the very same source to which the Jews themselves were accustomed to appeal. These secrets of revelation, they pretended, had been given from the beginning, together with what was contained in the Jewish Scripture. Adam, they said, received it,—the patriarchs received it,—and through them it was communicated to certain ancient sages, the especial confidants and guardians of holy wisdom. Whilst divine faith was presented to mankind in a homely garb, suited to vulgar apprehensions, this key to its real nature was thus preserved in the keeping of a few<sup>1</sup>. In short, this, according to their representa-

<sup>1</sup> Bruckeri Hist. Philosophiæ, tom. ii. p. 924—949.

tion, was the *Esoteric* doctrine of religion, as that contained in Scripture had been the *Exoteric*. Recalled for testimony to an early age, to names of whom a blind reverence made it nearly blasphemy to doubt ought ; and probably so bewildered in their view of the question, as to confound scepticism, concerning the fact of these holy men *having received* the communications pretended, with doubt as to the *validity* of *their evidence*, if given to such a fact, what wonder that many should fall into the snare ? The experience of every age justifies the great historian of Greece, in the conclusion to which he was led, by his attempt to ascertain the grounds on which so much idle fable had been received as truth by his countrymen<sup>m</sup>. Men will not take the trouble to search after truth, if any thing like it is ready provided to their hands ; and from this fate religious truth itself is not exempted.

<sup>m</sup> Lib. i. c. 20.



## PART III.

### AGE OF THE APOSTOLICAL FATHERS.

From A. D. 100—167.

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#### CHAP. I.

WITH the removal of God's inspired servants from the scene, ecclesiastical history assumes a widely different character from that which belongs to it during the record of their ministry. As long as their agency is employed, we look on with pious confidence in the wisdom of the measures pursued, and presume not to question the reasonableness of the objects effected. But, from the moment at which a transfer of authority is made to fallible rulers and teachers, these become amenable for the discharge of their trust to posterity, as well as to God; and it is our duty to inquire into the fidelity with which they have discharged it.

In no part of the Christian scheme is the divine wisdom more apparent than in this transfer. It was begun early, long before the removal of the apostles; and was so gradually accomplished, that even the death of St. John occasioned no such dismay in the Church, as might have been expected at the extinction of the last star by which its course



was to be directed. In the first instance too, this transfer of authority was made to those who, for a season, had exercised it under the instruction of the apostles, and whom the loss of their inspired guides left therefore engaged in a routine of duty no longer new or doubtful. The change, immense as it was, came almost imperceptibly both on the Church and on its rulers.

No portion of the Christian scheme awakens a more anxious inquiry, than the interesting experiment which was thus made in first intrusting Christianity to uninspired guardians. For, although this was done under circumstances which approach the nearest to extraordinary divine assistance, and the abruptness of leaving the Church at once to the ordinary help of the Spirit was thereby prevented; although, unlike succeeding rulers of the various Christian societies, the first uninspired authorities had received instruction immediately from the apostles, had acted for a time under their superintendence, and were, accordingly, trained in the practices, and taught the doctrines of their religion, in a way which might seem to have precluded the possibility of misapprehension,—still, they were liable to error; and error so near the source of divine truth, seems the more likely to mingle and to flow on with it, and to pollute its remotest streams.

Of the primitive worthies, on whom this weighty responsibility devolved, the most conspicuous are known by the title of the APOSTOLICAL FATHERS,

a term obviously derived from the peculiarity of character and circumstances to which I have been adverting. Others, indeed, may have been equally serviceable by their lives, and equally important to the age in which they flourished; but these have become eminently so to us by their writings, or, rather, the writings which have been transmitted to us as theirs.

In the catalogue of the apostolical Fathers we usually find the names of BARNABAS, HERMAS, CLEMENT, IGNATIUS, and POLYCARP. Why the first of these, himself an apostle of no small note, should be classed among the Fathers, it is difficult to understand. Among the works of the apostolical Fathers, is an Epistle claiming to be the production of Barnabas the apostle. Now, obviously, the only ground for classing this Epistle with these works, and not with the Scriptures, is that Barnabas did not write it; whilst the only reason for calling him an apostolical Father, is that he did write it. It is, in short, to suppose him at once, the author, and not the author.

One view alone can be at all compatible with this arrangement; which is, that the Epistle was originally his, but became so corrupted as to forfeit its scriptural character. This is possible; but this is not the view taken by the several disputants who from time to time have either advocated or condemned it *in toto*. And even then, although this solution might make the catalogue of the writings

of these Fathers a convenient place for the degraded Scripture, it would not bring down the *author* to the level of the Fathers. His history, therefore, can only be placed properly where it has been already noticed, with that of the other apostles.

HERMAS is another apostolical Father, whose title is doubtful. If his claim be good, he is the same with him whom St. Paul names at the close of his Epistle to the Romans<sup>a</sup>; and he is so described by most of the early authorities. Many learned men of later times, however, offended at the character of his singular work, *The Shepherd*, have anxiously sought for external evidence against this identity; nor have they been unsuccessful. There is strong ground for supposing that *The Shepherd* was a production of the second century, and that the Hermas who wrote it was a brother of Pius, bishop of Rome<sup>b</sup>. Nevertheless, as the point is not quite incontrovertible, and as this extraordinary performance was once so famous as by some to be accounted Scripture<sup>c</sup>, Hermas may still, perhaps, be allowed to keep his place among the apostolical Fathers, subject to such a protest as the evidence against his claim may seem to require.

<sup>a</sup> Romans xvi. 14.

<sup>b</sup> Moshemii De Rebus Christ. ante Const. p. 162.

<sup>c</sup> Irenæus apud Euseb. Hist. Eccl. lib. v. c. 8. Origen, too, considered it inspired.

CLEMENT is more certainly identified with him whom St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Philippians, names as one of "his fellow-labourers"; and from the great number of writings which were made popular by the authority of his assumed name, he may be considered as the most distinguished among the apostolical Fathers. He was bishop of Rome, by the appointment of St. Peter; and on the death of Anacletus, he appears to have united in his person the dignity which was before divided between St. Paul's successor and St. Peter's. Like most of the bishops of that dangerous see, he suffered martyrdom. Of his writings, only one Epistle has come down to us, the authenticity of which can be clearly made out. It is addressed from the Church of Rome to the Church of Corinth. His Second Epistle, as it is called, if originally his, is confessedly very much changed from its original character. But, in truth, there is good reason to believe that no Epistle corresponding to this was ever written by Clement. Irenæus<sup>o</sup> was not acquainted with more than one, and his quotations prove that one to have been the first. Eusebius<sup>p</sup> mentions the second, but expressly states, that he could discover no ancient authority for it, and rejects it. Diony-

<sup>n</sup> Philipp. iv. 3. "Clement also, and other my fellow-labourers, whose names are in the book of life."

<sup>o</sup> Adv. Hæres. lib. iii. c. 3.

<sup>p</sup> Hist. Eccl. lib. iii. c. 38. "Οτι μηδὲ τοὺς ἀρχαίους αὐτῇ πεποιημένους ἴσμεν."

sius, bishop of Corinth, Clement of Alexandria, and Origen, all bear testimony to one only, the first. Two more have been found of late years, attached to a Syriac version of the New Testament, and were appended by Wetstein in his folio edition of the sacred volume. Allowing the full force of the evidence in favour of the genuineness of these, arising out of their scriptural language, and the absence of terms and topics which belong to a later period, still, this is counterbalanced by other internal evidence which is no less strong against it; and no trace of them is to be found in ancient writers<sup>q</sup>. About the spuriousness of the other pieces to which his name has been attached, there is no controversy<sup>r</sup>.

The remains of IGNATIUS are less scanty, and yet these are confined to seven Epistles, written during a hasty and harassing journey from Antioch to Rome, for the purpose of being put to death at a public exhibition. No ancient writings have been

<sup>q</sup> For all the arguments against their authenticity, Lardner's *Dissertation on the Two Epistles* may be consulted.

<sup>r</sup> These are,

1. An *Epistle to James*, our Lord's brother.
2. *Recognitions*, in ten books.
3. *Clementina*.
4. *Apostolical Constitutions*, in eight books.
5. *Apostolical Canons*.

Of these, the *Recognitions* is the most ancient and the most valuable: it was written, probably, about the middle of the second century.



more the subject of fraud and corruption than these\*. Eusebius mentions seven genuine Epistles, which Pearson, in his *Vindiciæ Ignatianæ*, has very ably identified with that collection which is now called *The genuine Epistles*†. There is another collection of Ignatius's Epistles, of which the former are the basis, but they are most grossly altered and interpolated. A third set appears with his name, which are altogether a forgery. After all, too, although no one can deny the force of Bishop Pearson's arguments in disproving the authenticity of the longer Epistles, and establishing the preferable claims of the shorter, still, it is by no means clear, that the imposture practised on what we call the *Interpolated Epistles* was not an after attempt to carry too far, what had been more sparingly, more skilfully, and more successfully effected in the shorter Epistles; and that the genuine Epistles themselves have been tampered with. The temptation to such a proceeding was strong; and there are certainly not a few internal marks that it was practised. Ignatius was the disciple of St. John, and bishop of Antioch, and suffered martyrdom under Trajan, A. D. 108.

The history of POLYCARP brings us much later into the annals of the Church. He suffered beyond

\* Ignatius's Epistles were first published in Latin by Archbishop Usher, and afterwards in Greek by Vossius.

† See Eusebius, lib. iii. c. 36.



the middle of the second century, and, like Ignatius, self-devoted for the purpose of diverting persecution from his brethren in Christ. He was that bishop or "angel" of the Church of Smyrna, of whom St. John makes so honourable mention in the book of Revelations<sup>u</sup>; and the narrative of his death, which was drawn up by that Church, is peculiarly valuable. According to Irenæus<sup>x</sup> he left behind him various writings. All that now remains, however, is an Epistle to the Philippians, and even of this the original Greek is imperfect, and the remainder only known through a Latin translation.

However worthy of pious contemplation a more detailed biography of these holy men may be, the most important, and the most interesting object after all, which is to be obtained from the study of their lives and writings, is, to ascertain how Christians behaved when first left to themselves; or, to speak more accurately, when for the first time left without any extraordinary divine instruction and superintendence. However famous in their generation might be the names of Clement, Ignatius, and Polycarp, to us they are most interesting as specimens of that generation; as representing in their lives and writings, the opinions and the manners, the practice and the faith, which enjoyed the approbation of the primitive Church. Taking this,

<sup>u</sup> Rev. ii. 8—10.

<sup>x</sup> Cited by Eusebius, Hist. lib. v. c. 20.

then, as the main object of inquiry, I shall not confine my view to their individual histories, but enlarge it from all sources of collateral information which may tend to make the sketch of primitive Christianity more complete or more faithful.

The leading questions to which we may expect such an inquiry to furnish replies, are,

I. What parts of the apostolic ministry were intended for the *mere foundation of Christianity*?

II. What parts were intended for the *preservation* of it?

III. How *were these intentions* fulfilled in the ministry of the apostolical Fathers and their contemporaries?

I. *What parts of the apostolic ministry were intended for the mere foundation of Christianity?*

In the formation of any society, nothing is more likely, than that the means adopted for its first establishment, should be also the means proposed for its continuance and security. Thus, the same institutions by which Lycurgus, or Solon, each established a community of that description which best pleased himself, were by them considered as the most conducive to perpetuate it in its genuine purity. This, indeed, will be mostly the case in all *human* societies. But the reverse occurs in the history of the Church. It was established

by miracles exhibiting an infinite variety of super-human power ; it has been perpetuated without any. Its very rulers and agents (as if to make the contrast more striking) have not remained the same. The terms apostle, prophet, interpreter, &c., denote offices which seem to have been designed only for the formation of the Church ; and, accordingly, to have been dropped on its complete establishment. Even some of the customary usages of Christianity partook of this temporary character, and these, if preserved, have been applied by the purest Churches to purposes different from those which they originally served.

The reason of this peculiarity in the character of the Christian society, or Church, is not simply that its object is spiritual, but consists in its particular mode of reference to that object. The Church was founded not that new truths should be revealed through it, but to preserve a revelation already made. The distinction is very important, and although so obvious as not to require any proof, deserves to be familiarized to the mind in every possible way. The Church was founded by miracles ; and the Christian is often tempted, rather hastily, to assert that God might, if it had been requisite, properly and consistently have perpetuated it by miracles. But that this cannot be the case, a moment's reflection will lead us to determine. Miracles are the appropriate evidence of one who has himself received a miraculous

communication ; but what purpose would miracles serve for attesting a revelation *fully given* to a preceding generation ? A Christian who in the nineteenth century should perform miracles, would naturally be regarded as giving evidence of his possessing, not merely the Christian truths as hitherto revealed, but some new light also. A miracle, and a new revelation, go together ; when the one ceases, the other also is withdrawn. For what is the import of a miracle ? A miracle is a change in the order of the visible and material universe, and therefore an appropriate indication that some corresponding spiritual or moral change has taken place. It is *the sign of God revealing and appointing*, and is inconsistent with the permanent course of an appointment once made. God's first great miracle was the creation and the establishment of the order of the universe ; and this being done, the system was left to work as by a power created with it. God's last great scene of miracles was, the revelation of the Christian scheme ; and this being established, its continuance is, in like manner, left to the ordinary operation of that appointment.

If, on the other hand, Christ and his apostles had taught Christianity *partially*, had only revealed part of the religious knowledge which was designed for the world ; in this case it is very conceivable, that until such knowledge should be complete, individuals in the Church, from time to time, or

a regular succession of persons, should have been inspired ; and the new light would in each case have required the power of working miracles. The Pope's infallibility supposes such a need ; and if it be well founded, every successive Pope, as long as the age of infallibility lasts, ought to have this power ; because infallibility is the power of revealing on any given point, and supposes therefore a constant extraordinary intercourse with God ; which has never been found separate from the power of working miracles. The withdrawing of this divine power would in this, as in all other cases, be the negative sign that the infallibility had ceased.

But it may be said, that although the connection between a miracle and a new revelation, be reasonable in theory, do we really find it in the history of God's dealings ? The Mosaic revelation was established by miracles ; but miracles did not cease with the death of Moses and Aaron, or even of their immediate successors. To this the reply is very obvious. The Mosaic revelation contained neither all, nor, perhaps, the most considerable portion of that stock of divine truth, for the preservation of which the Israelites were formed into a Church. Miracles were from time to time performed ; but by whom, and for what purpose ? By the prophets ; who attested thereby the divine communication of *new light*, which from time to time was added to the former, and which did not complete the sum of the old revelation, until four



hundred years before the coming of Christ. It was then that they were left with the Old Testament complete, to employ it to their benefit, or to abuse its light, as they chose. Occasionally, too, the performance of miracles arose out of a peculiarity of the old dispensation, which is scarcely ever sufficiently attended to in the parallels drawn between God's former and present Churches. They were the *temporal* enactments of God, as the extraordinary *temporal* Ruler of the Israelites; and had Christ established a kingdom of this world, then, and in that case only, might we expect a corresponding interference of miraculous power.

To the patriarchal dispensation, as it is termed, the same remarks are still more applicable. New revelations were continually wanted, and appropriate miraculous interpositions occurred. Every revelation was planted by these extraordinary means; and whenever one of God's servants arose to work fresh miracles, it was to establish some new truth.

Notwithstanding, therefore, the pious hope of many good Christians, that miracles may perhaps be once more permitted for the speedier conversion of the heathen, there is, even in this pious hope, something perhaps inconsistent with the *sufficiency* of the New Testament revelation. A power of working miracles would place the missionary in a new character. If wrought in testimony of his preaching, his language would become equivalent to holy Scripture. He would no longer be a minister



of the New Testament record ; and even if he preached no new doctrine, he must be supposed to preach, not as from the Bible, but by revelation,—as one guarded against error, and inspired with correct views, in the same manner as the apostles. It should be recollected, too, that Christianity can now be proved, to any mind capable of understanding it, by the various sources of testimony which we ordinarily use. Miracles were employed at first, because no other testimony belonged to it ; but, although Gentiles and Jews were directed to search the Old Testament for authority, would it not have been strange to have found the apostles performing miracles to attest the ministry of Moses or Isaiah ? Equally so would it be, under any circumstances, for a modern preacher of the Gospel to be furnished with miraculous testimony in support of the apostolic ministry. The volume of revelation has been closed and sealed. Christ's kingdom is come. Miraculous interposition *now* would indicate that the Christian scheme hitherto has not conveyed all the truth requisite for mankind ; and the assumption of a power of revelation, or infallibility, amounts to the same thing<sup>y</sup>.

<sup>y</sup> Of course any miracle, which was the fulfilment of a prophecy delivered during the inspired age, would not be inconsistent with this view, *e. g.* the interference of the Almighty to prevent the building of the temple at Jerusalem ; for which there is certainly sufficient evidence in the case of Julian's attempt, and which would, no doubt, be repeated, if ever a similar emergency required it. That Julian did encounter miraculous opposition, has been

All miracles, then, may be considered as forming that part of the apostles' ministry intended for the establishment, and not for the preservation, of Christianity, whether these miracles were Signs and Wonders, or spiritual gifts. At the same time, as nothing could be so mortifying to the pride of the Church as the loss of this splendid power, many might be expected to repeat the attempt to perform them again and again, after this power was withdrawn, with the fond hope that the attempt might be successful. Any occasional appearance of success would be hailed, from time to time, by the superstitious as an omen of returning miraculous agency, and would afford a ready instrument for fraudulent practices, as the Church began to offer temptation to ambition or avarice. No wonder, then, that the notice of miracles extends through its history; and that, however inconsistent with the character of God's final dispensation, they should become the constant boast of Christians, exactly in proportion as that dispensation has been least understood.

But not only miracles ceased, because designed solely for the establishment of the Church; but the obligation to perpetuate those customs which were connected with miraculous agency ceased also together with it. As instances of these, may be

placed beyond all reasonable doubt by Warburton. See his *Discourse on the attempt of the Emperor Julian to rebuild the Temple of Jerusalem.*

noticed the practice of anointing the sick, and that of laying on of hands by the apostle, subsequent to baptism.

The first of these customs, evidently, was established as a form of miraculous cure, similar to that wrought by the pool of Bethesda. It was, no doubt, the mode in which the apostles fulfilled the Lord's especial injunction to "heal the sick." When, therefore, such cures ceased, the cessation itself was equivalent to a formal annulment of the practice by God. Nevertheless, as nothing could have been more mortifying to the spiritual pride of a Christian, than the loss of so splendid an appendage to the Church as miraculous power, (agreeably to the remarks above made,) the designing, the superstitious, and, perhaps, the truly pious themselves, would naturally be slow to admit the evidence that its virtue had ceased. To the dying man and to his distressed friends, even the faintest possibility of success would be a sufficient motive for the experiment. Thus it would be continued, by some from a hope that its efficacy might be renewed; by others from reverence for a custom, which, although ineffectual, had once been blessed by the Spirit; by others, finally, it would be persisted in from a view, created by enthusiasm or fraud, that where no palpable miracle was wrought, a secret miraculous influence must be communicated in lieu of the specific benefit attached to it. Hence, in latter ages, its invariable use in a great part of the Christian world

as a means of grace to the departing Christian. Had the custom, when its miraculous use ceased, been in its nature at all applicable to edification, the reverence which retained it for such a purpose, in preference to the introduction of any new ceremony, would have been even praiseworthy. As it is, its preservation in the Greek and Roman Churches is a curious monument of human weakness.

The origin and meaning of confirmation, as performed by the apostles, have been elsewhere explained. The apostles used to lay their hands on those who had been baptized, in order that they may receive some spiritual gift,—that is, some miraculous sign that the unseen descent of the Holy Ghost on them at baptism was real<sup>2</sup>. None but an apostle could do this, and it was done, sometimes immediately on baptism, sometimes after a long interval; but all Christians seem to have claimed it as a privilege, whenever they had opportunity of receiving it. The rite was called *confirmation*, and the gift, the sign of confirming.

Properly, then, confirmation was a temporary usage, connected with a miraculous display, and,

<sup>2</sup> See St. Mark xvi. 17, 18. where confirmation is promised indiscriminately to all believers, and the particular gifts specified. St. Paul must allude to this in his Epistle to the Romans, chap. i. 11. "I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift." At that time the Church at Rome had not yet, it would seem, been visited by an apostle.

indeed, appended to the apostolical office, together with which it ceased. Like the unction of the sick, however, it was still kept up by those who succeeded the apostles in the government of the Churches, but apparently from a more rational respect for a rite with which such important results had been so long associated. Between the apostolical Church and that even which immediately followed it, no difference could have been more remarkable than that arising from the increased proportion of infants baptized. Hence arose one of the first demands on the uninspired Church for its discretionary power in matters left indeterminate. Those Christians admitted to a participation of the Sacrament before they could, “by reason of their tender years,” be taught the meaning of the rite, seemed to require some further formal and public ceremony, in order to enable the Church to discharge its duty of solemnly informing them of this meaning, whenever they should be capable of receiving the information. The apostolical rite of confirmation had been already made solemn and sacred in the eyes of Christians, and would on that account be far preferable to any new form which might have been appointed for the new object required. It was more—its former object was, to a certain extent, analogous to that for which it was now adopted. It had once solemnized the visible sign of assurance to the baptized, that he was a portion of the Christian temple. Its present object was to awaken



the baptized to an inquiry into the evidence which he then possessed of the same state of grace. Hence, in the most judicious ecclesiastical regulations, it is made to take place when the mind is supposed to be just capable of appreciating the evidences of Christianity, and the Christian is capable of beneficially partaking of those rites by which he celebrates and renews his spiritual union with Christ. It is not a sacrament, nor would that Church be unapostolical which should reject it ; but it is the most venerable institution of the uninspired Church, and the object of it is so consonant to Christian principles, that if such a form had never been used by the apostles, that object would, doubtless, still have been provided for by their successors, and some less august ceremony would have been introduced.

Another branch of the Christian institution, which was designed only for the foundation of Christianity, and not for its perpetuation, consists in those ministerial offices, the essential characteristic of which was the display of miraculous power. If miracles have been shewn to be inconsistent with a perfect and established dispensation, of course we should be startled to find any good evidence for the continuance of such offices in the Church. But no such authority exists. The writings of the apostolical Fathers are not only without the mention of the terms apostles, interpreters, prophets, &c. as denoting offices in the Church, but they speak a language incompatible with the continuance of these



ministerial functions under any name. Indeed, there seems to have been no slight scruple in the primitive Church on this point. For although the apostolic order, for instance, was in some respects succeeded and represented by the race of uninspired rulers on whom devolved the government of the Church, yet they presumed not to apply to themselves the title of apostles. It might have led to the error of supposing that the essential and characteristic point, infallibility, had descended to them. And although, as in the case of confirmation, they scrupled not to apply to a new rite the name and circumstances of one antiquated, because in that case no mistake was possible ; yet in the other case, the error would have been at once more likely to occur and more dangerous. The Church would never have borne the claim of a Clement or an Ignatius to be *in all respects* the successors of St. Peter and St. Paul ; and whatever ambition may have been dormant in the infant society, it was necessary that some generations should pass away, and the office and character of an apostle of Christ be less distinctly present to men's minds, before the fraud should be even practicable.

Among the offices created solely for the foundation of the Church, there was one, indeed, which was not necessarily connected with miraculous power,—that of deaconesses. Concerning the origin and peculiar need of this, enough, perhaps, has

been said in the preceding pages. Its continuance was prolonged for some centuries after the apostolic era ; and may, doubtless, be with propriety revived, whenever a similar emergency shall call for it.

1. The first part of the paper is devoted to a general  
discussion of the problem. It is shown that the  
problem is of great importance in the theory of  
the differential equations of the second order.  
The second part of the paper is devoted to a  
detailed study of the problem. It is shown that  
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the differential equations of the second order.

## CHAP. II.

WHAT PARTS OF THE APOSTOLICAL MINISTRY WERE  
DESIGNED FOR THE PERPETUATION OF CHRISTIANITY.

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TO the apostolical age the divine origin of Christianity was satisfactorily attested by miracles and miraculous gifts; the knowledge and the practice of it, too, must have been well understood and familiarized to the various societies of Christians which so long enjoyed the instruction and superintendence of the apostles and their fellow-ministers: but the apostolical ministry not being designed for the benefit of that age only, some provision was to be made for perpetuating the doctrines and the practices which had been thus established.

Of these the first which presents itself to notice is *a written record*. For the establishment of Christianity, the apostles were commissioned to preach, and to confirm their preaching by miracles: for the perpetuation of Christianity, they were commissioned, *first*, to register the substance of their preaching; *secondly*, to provide means for making this register equivalent to the word divinely preached; and *thirdly*, to provide a channel of evidence to attest the sacred character of that register. These two last objects were effected by forming Christians into

perpetual societies. Had the Christian revelation been left to a record without a Church, it must ever have been liable to two mischances: first, it would have been the property of the learned only—a mere branch of philosophy; secondly, all connected chain of evidence for its scriptural character would soon have been lost; had it been left unrecorded to the various Christian societies, it must soon have been corrupted and changed.

The very form of the New Testament Scriptures indicates their dependence on some further act of apostolical ministry, such as was the formation of Christian societies. For, beyond the primary benefit which the Scriptures derive from the Church, in the provision of an unbroken and perpetual channel for evidence;—beyond this, the total absence of systematic instruction from them implies, that the sacred record was accommodated to the existence of a Church; into whose charge should be entrusted the mode of teaching the doctrines, and of conforming to the precepts, which that record preserved.

Among the various writings of which the New Testament is composed, there can be no doubt that the four Gospels, the Revelation of St. John, and the Acts of the Apostles, must have been intended as perpetual records. In writing or inditing the Gospels, the apostles were performing for posterity their primary office of *Witnesses*. We should naturally expect from some of them, that in their character

of expounders of the Gospel scheme, of *ministers of the Spirit*, they would in like manner have laboured partly for future ages. And yet Epistles, and these too abounding in matters of temporary concern, might leave some room for questioning whether the instruction of future generations was contemplated by the writers. The question is not material; for after all, the ministry of the apostles was really the ministry of the Holy Ghost; and whether that divine Ruler chose to employ his servants in a sphere of ministry even greater than its extent appeared to *them*, or not; doubtless, the instruction of posterity was the main purpose for which those Epistles were inspired. And it was so, because such is the main purpose which they have served, and for which no other provision has been made. From the Gospels and the Acts we might have learnt all the facts of inspired history; but, like the apostles at the close of their Lord's ministry, we should have wanted not merely an historical remembrancer "to call all things to our mind," but some further infallible expositor "to teach us all these things,"—to teach us the full meaning of all that had been done and registered. The epistolary form in which this has been accomplished might create a question, as to whether the apostles themselves understood that they were doing this for posterity as well as for their immediate charges; but that this was even the *principal* design of the Holy Spirit, is a view scarcely to be controverted. More;



the careful manner in which these Epistles were preserved, transcribed, and circulated, from the earliest times, is a strong presumption that they were from the very first considered in this light. It was this, perhaps, more than personal respect for the memory of the writers, which caused them to be so carefully kept and transmitted. Nor can the occasional topics with which they are occupied be regarded as certain proof that even the apostles' views were confined to the instruction of those immediately addressed; for although the Epistle to the Colossians, for instance, contains some peculiar allusions to the state of the Church at Colosse<sup>a</sup>; yet we know that this was sent with a special charge to transmit it for the perusal of the Laodiceans; and to obtain from them the perusal of one which St. Paul appears to have written to that Church. Why may not St. Paul, and the other writers of the Epistles of the New Testament, in like manner, have contemplated the perusal of every Epistle which they wrote, by every Church in every generation?

It is to be observed, too, that among these Epistles are some which really deserve the name of treatises; although, having been addressed to particular Churches or bodies of Christians, they may in one sense be called Epistles. Such are the Epistles To the Romans, and To the Hebrews.

In considering then the New Testament record

<sup>a</sup> See particularly c. iv. 8—10. and again ver. 17.

as one of the measures for perpetuating Christianity, its twofold character should be carefully kept in view. It is a record of facts; and so far answers to the primary character of Christ's apostles, his witnesses<sup>b</sup>. It is beyond this a record of the interpretation of the Christian scheme, which was made up of those facts; and, so far, corresponds to the secondary office of the apostles,—that of ministers of the Spirit. It contains not only a revelation, properly so called, but the infallible interpretation and unfolding of it. It was purposely so framed as to preclude the need of that which was not to be perpetuated,—an unerring expositor.

The sacred record then is most strictly a substitute for all the apostolical instruction. But the apostolical instruction was preserved pure and entire in the preaching of the apostles by the Holy Spirit's extraordinary suggestions and corrections, and it was authenticated by testimonial miracles. An ordinary and permanent provision was requisite to compensate for all this when withdrawn; and, accordingly, these were among the objects contemplated in the formation of *the Church*. In furnishing a channel of perpetual evidence; it served the

<sup>b</sup> Herein more particularly we recognize the fulfilment of the Lord's prophecy respecting the office of the Holy Spirit. "He shall testify (or witness) of me; and ye *also* shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning." John xv. 26, 27.

same purpose to the record, as did the testimonial miracles to the apostles' preaching; in preserving the record entire and uncorrupt, it would do that which the Holy Spirit's suggestions and corrections had done for the unrecorded revelation, when only existing in the memories and minds of the apostles.

The Church then was the second great provision made for the perpetuation of Christianity. But its importance was not confined to its character as a safeguard, or as a channel of evidence. The Scriptures were so left as to depend on its operations, for the most efficacious employment and dispensation of the holy truths which they contained. With every change of language, of climate, of prejudice, and of all circumstances whatever arising out of religion, or accidentally interfering with it, the Gospel would require to be taught in a somewhat different form. Truths which for any reason had become subject to controversy or misapprehension, would need a solemn specification in the formula of a creed or an article; and the young and the newly initiated would require to receive instruction in that particular form which might put them on their guard against those errors to which they were most exposed. Change of manners, of climate, of government, and especially of the relative situation between the Church and State, would present exigencies which could only be properly met by the enactments of an authorized body. All these are the purposes for which Christians were

formed into societies, and which that portion of the apostolical ministry appears to have effected.

Still, we should form a very inadequate view of the benefits of the social connection between Christians, if we did not extend its sphere of utility even beyond that of facilitating and adjusting the other provisions made by the Holy Spirit for perpetuating religion. More was intended, and more has been accomplished by it. It is one of the appointed means of salvation ; its character is, in short, sacramental. Although it is true, that the individual welfare or misery of every Christian will, according to the Gospel scheme, be separately determined, and sentence be passed, not on Churches, but on individuals ; yet it is no less certain, that the means of obtaining future reward, and of avoiding future punishment, are not appointed to be communicated to men otherwise than as members of a social body. Every promise of the Gospel is limited to such as shall thus associate themselves with a Church. It is not by virtue of the act of faith, or by the confession of it, that we receive our first union with the Holy Spirit ; but by the act of initiation into the Church ; it is by baptism. We are not individually, but collectively called by the apostle, “ the temple of the Holy Ghost ;” and he who expects to share in the benefits of Christ’s death and resurrection, can only do so as a member of his body—a portion of his residence, the Church.

• 1 Cor. iii. 16, 17. vi. 19. 2 Cor. vi. 16. Eph. iii. 20—22.

The Church then considered as a provision for perpetuating Christianity, has four distinct offices: first, that of preserving the Scriptures; next, (which is closely connected with the former,) that of bearing witness to them; thirdly, that of judiciously dispensing the truths contained in them; and, lastly, it has the holy office of conveying grace. Accordingly, some of the several component parts of such a society, as well as its several institutions and enactments, are designed to fulfil, sometimes one, and sometimes another of these offices. In some instances more than one, or all, are to be recognized. For instance, as the channel for preserving and dispensing Gospel truth, it has ministers of different orders, and it establishes schools of religious instruction. Again, in its office of conveying to its members the grace of which it is the appointed means, it enjoins rites and ceremonies, and prescribes the form and manner of public prayers.

All these objects then being contemplated in the formation of the Church, the Church's separate functions were begun and sanctioned by the apostles before their departure from the scene. To its operation as a body was left, before their departure, the full exercise of all these separate offices, whereby its character as a permanent provision may be understood and attested. It ordained ministers; it celebrated rites; it appointed schools, and prescribed other modes of religious instruction. Even



as a channel of evidence to the Scriptures, it began to be recognized before the death of St. John, who, on Eusebius's positive testimony, lived to see the first scriptural deposit made and put in trust for posterity<sup>d</sup>.

But not only did the apostles thus fashion the Church, and see its several functions in exercise before their deaths; provision was also made for its security and continuance. Itself appointed to preserve religion, it required some special provision for its own preservation<sup>e</sup>: and there was need that this too should be sanctioned by divine authority, and illustrated by apostolical practice. Hence the exercise of Church discipline, as emanating from the Church, was commenced even during the ministry of St. Paul. His Epistle to the Corinthians proves that apostolical interference was made, not to supersede, but to enforce the pains and penalties of the Church. The same view may be obtained from the manner in which the bishops of the seven Churches of Asia are addressed in the book of Revelations. It was the more necessary that this point also should have been understood before the close of the Holy Ghost's extraordinary

<sup>d</sup> Hist. lib. iii. c. 24.

<sup>e</sup> "There is one end of civil government peculiar to a good constitution, namely, the happiness of its subjects; there is another end essential to a good government, but common to it with many bad ones—its own preservation." Paley's *Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy*, vol. ii. book vi. chap. 7.



superintendence ; that men may have the less plea to resort to a code of discipline foreign to the true character of the Church.

Before I proceed to a distinct examination of the manner in which the uninspired Church continued, after the removal of the apostles, to fulfil in each of its departments its character as a perpetual provision, one point must be settled. In order to judge how far the primitive Christians have been, or ourselves now are, true to our trust, it is necessary to determine how far the *discretionary* authority of the Church goes—what is the principle by which that authority is shaped and bounded ?

And first it may be as well to get rid of a source of indistinctness and confusion, which is for ever encumbering discussions on this subject. We are wont to speak of the foundation of the Church,—the authority of the Church,—the various characteristics of the Church,—and the like, as if the Church were, originally at least, one society in all respects. From the period in which the Gospel was planted beyond the precincts of Judæa, this manifestly ceased to be the case ; and as Christian societies were formed among people more and more unconnected and dissimilar in character and circumstances, the difficulty of considering the Church as one society increases. Still, from the habitual and unreflecting use of this phrase, “ The Church,” it is no uncommon case to confound the two notions ; and occasionally to speak of the various societies of

Christians as *one*; occasionally as *distinct* bodies. The mischief which has been grafted on this inadvertency in the use of the term, has already been noticed; and it is no singular instance of the enormous practical results which may be traced to mere ambiguity of expression. The Church is undoubtedly *one*, and so is the human race, one; but not *as a society*. It was from the first composed of distinct societies, which were called one, because formed on common principles. It is only one society, considered as to its future existence. The circumstance of its having one common head, Christ, one Spirit, one Father, are points of unity, which no more make the Church one society on earth, than the circumstance of all men having the same Creator, and being derived from the same Adam, renders the human race one political community. That Scripture often speaks of Christians generally under the term "the Church," is true; but if we wish fully to understand the force of the term so applied, we need only call to mind the frequent analogous use of ordinary historical language when no such doubt occurs. Take, for example, Thucydides's *History of the Peloponnesian War*. It contains an account of the transactions of two opposed parties, each made up of many distinct communities; on the one side were democracies, on the other oligarchies. Yet precisely the same use is made by the historian of the terms "the democracy" and "the oligarchy," as we find Scripture adopting with regard to the

term "the Church." No one is misled by these, so as to suppose the community of Athens one with that of Corcyra; or the Theban with that of the Lacedæmonians. When the heathen writer speaks of "the democracy of" or "in" the various democratical states, we naturally understand him to mean distinct societies *formed on similar principles*; and so, doubtless, ought we to interpret the sacred writers when they, in like manner, make mention of the Church of or in Antioch, Rome, Ephesus, Corinth, &c.

But there was also an especial reason why the term Church should have been often used by the sacred writers as if it applied to one society. God's dispensation had hitherto been limited to a single society,—the Jewish people. Until the Gospel was preached, the Church of God *was* one society. It therefore sometimes occurs with the force of a transfer from the objects of God's *former* dispensation, to those of his *present* dispensation. In like manner, as Christians are called "the elect," their bodies "the temple," and their Mediator "the High Priest;" so their condition, as the objects of God's new dispensation, is designated by the term "the Church of Christ," and "the Church."

The Church is one then, not as consisting of one society, but because the various societies or Churches were then modelled, and ought still to be so, on the same principles; and because they

enjoy common privileges,—one Lord, one Spirit, one Baptism. Accordingly, the Holy Ghost, through his agents the apostles, has not left any detailed account of the formation of any Christian society ; but he has very distinctly marked the great principles on which all were to be founded, whatever distinctions may exist amongst them. In short, the foundation of the Church by the apostles was not analogous to the work of Romulus or Solon ; it was not, properly, the foundation of Christian societies which occupied them, but the establishment of the principles on which Christians in all ages might form societies for themselves. What they did form, may be regarded rather as specimens and exemplifications of these principles. Agreeably to this view, in the application of these principles, some variety occurs in the history even of the earliest Churches. At the same time, the foundation-principles themselves recorded in the Scripture, and acted on by the inspired revealers of them, formed a conspicuous boundary to this discretionary power ; and it is by those, accordingly, that our judgment is to be regulated in the proposed inquiry.

What then were these principles ? As far as they coincided with those on which the old Church of God, the Jewish, was founded, it was not to be expected that any very express directions should be given. That in God's last social establishment, his revelation was thereby to be preserved and

applied, as was the design of the Mosaic institution, was manifest; and the only question was, how far the method of doing this was changed? On this point it might be expected that no room should be left for doubt or misapprehension.

I. In the first place then, God's ancient Church was established on earthly principles. It was a temporal government, in which his laws were enforced by temporal rewards and punishments. It was strictly a kingdom of this world. Hence arose the first distinct principle which it was requisite to specify. Our Saviour's death, connected with those expressions of his, which at the time of their being spoken were so hard to be understood, left this as solemnly and as awfully impressed as can well be conceived. A Christian society was to be purely *spiritual*; its objects,—its functions,—its connections,—were all to be strictly separated from those of any worldly society; it was his whose "kingdom was not of this world<sup>f</sup>." But most pointedly was this marked in the final establishment of Christianity. God became the ruler of his people permanently, in a way which precluded the possibility of attaching his residence and government to *any place* or sensible circumstance, such as characterize societies of this world. There was no temple—no visible high priest—no local me-

<sup>f</sup> John xviii. 36.



dium of communication, to correspond with the residence of earthly rulers, and the circumstances of their supremacy. The time was then come, as Christ foretold to the Samaritan woman, when neither in mount Gerizim, nor yet at Jerusalem, were men to “worship the Father;” but they that worshipped Him, were to do so “in spirit, and in truth<sup>g</sup>.”

II. In the second place, God’s ancient Church was a *partial establishment*. Moses and the prophets were sent only to one nation; and to them were limited all God’s offers, promises, and threats. Here then was another material point of difference which it pleased God to draw between the former and the latter dispensation, and another rule to be specified. The *new* Church of God, as opposed to the *old*, was not only to be spiritual, but *universal*; and, accordingly, the command expressly was, “make disciples of *all nations*<sup>h</sup>.” Until this new ordinance, part of the human race only was called God’s own people; the rest were viewed in the light of foreigners, and were placed out of the pale of his peculiar government. Hence, among the various images by which this innovation of the Christian scheme is alluded to in our Saviour’s language, Satan is represented as deprived of that portion of the world which, in a partial dispensation, was left to him. “The prince of this world” was

<sup>g</sup> John iv. 21, 24.

<sup>h</sup> Matt. xxviii. 19.



now to surrender his claim, and *all* nations were invited by God to become subjects of the universal empire which he had established.

III. A third circumstance about the Jewish Church, which was not to be perpetuated under the new dispensation, was, that its privileges were dispensed in *different degrees*. The native Jew enjoyed precedence, it was presumed, in the sight of the Almighty Ruler ; his was the highest class of God's people. The proselyte of righteousness claimed the next rank, and was entitled to higher hopes and privileges than the humble proselyte of the gate. In the internal constitution of the Church itself was exhibited a continual gradation of religious rights. The temple was partitioned off by its courts and by its mystic veil to indicate the remote, the nearer, and the nearest approach to the Divine presence. To the Levites a more intimate communication with God was assigned, than to the other tribes ; and they again were excluded from the holy of holies, into which the High-priest alone might enter. In God's new dispensation there were to be no corresponding distinctions. There were to be no degrees of Christianity. The veil of the temple had been rent in twain from the top to the bottom: Now there was to be not only "one Lord," but "one faith," "one baptism<sup>1</sup>," one participation of every privilege for all nations and for all portions of

<sup>1</sup> Eph. iv. 5.

the Church. Unity or oneness was to characterize the new Church, not less than spirituality or universality. This, although, considered abstractedly, it may seem the least of the innovations in the new form of God's kingdom, was, as appears from the preceding history, the most difficult to accomplish. It was the most obnoxious to Jewish prejudices, and is, accordingly, more darkly intimated than the others by our Lord himself;—in parables, for instance, such as that of the labourers in the vineyard<sup>k</sup>, and in other indistinct allusions, which would be certainly understood, only when the event to which they pointed had taken place. It is from St. Paul's writings, and from the history of his labours, which were peculiarly devoted to the establishment of this principle, that it derives its clearest elucidation and sanction.

The three great principles then, on which every Church, or Christian society, was formed by the apostles, were SPIRITUALITY, UNIVERSALITY, and UNITY. Out of these arose one important limit to the discretionary powers of the uninspired Church, when deprived of extraordinary authority. It is of the last importance that this fact should be borne in mind, in every appeal to the practice and authority of the primitive Church. There is often (even among protestant divines) a vague method of citing the authority of the early Churches in matters of

<sup>k</sup> Matt. xx. 1—16.

discipline and practice, without any distinct view of the exact weight of that authority. In quoting doctrinal statements we are generally more accurate in our estimate ; but it is undeniable, that the practices and discipline of the primitive Churches, are subject to the same kind of check from Scripture, as are their opinions and faith ; and are in no instance to be received as if they were matters left altogether to their discretion. The *principles*, although not the specific rules, are given in the New Testament : and this is, perhaps, nearly all that is done in the case of the doctrines themselves. Only the elements, out of which these are to be composed, are furnished by Scripture. So far from being stated in a formal way, some of the abstract terms for these doctrines are not found in the Scriptures ; such a statement and enunciation of them being left to the discretion of the Church. So, too, the principles of the Church-establishment were given, and were put in practice for illustration ; and the application of these principles was all that was left to the discretion of its uninspired rulers. In short, every Church, in all ages, holds Scripture in its hand, as its warrant for its usages as well as for its doctrines ; and had the immediate successors and companions of the apostles, from the very first, corrupted the government and constitution of the Church, *we* should be enabled to condemn them, from the New Testament ; and to this test it is the duty of all ages to bring them. Their management

of those matters which are said to be left indeterminate, has only the authority of an experiment ; it is a practical illustration of Scriptural principles. Whenever they have been successful in this experiment, it would, indeed, generally be unwise and presumptuous in us to hazard a different mode of attaining the same result ; though even here, any deviation is authorized by difference of circumstances ; the same principle which guided them being kept in view by us. But, in whatever stage of ecclesiastical history the principle itself shall appear to have been forgotten,—it matters not how far back the practice may be traced,—it has no authority as a precedent. The Bible is our only attested rule ; and we must appeal to it with the boldness recommended by the apostle to his converts ; and though an angel from heaven preach unto us any other rule than that we have received, let him be accursed<sup>1</sup>.

This boundary line to the discretionary powers of the Church would be quite clear, supposing the ecclesiastical principles to have been left only as above considered, in the form of abstract instruction, whether formally enunciated, or certainly deducible from the Scriptures. But far more than this was done. On these very principles the apostles actually formed and regulated societies of Christians ; so as to leave them not merely abstractedly propounded, but practically proved. This proceeding,

<sup>1</sup> Gal. i. 8, 9.

while it lightened the difficulty of the uninspired Church, (especially of those who first received the guidance of it from the apostles, and who most needed it,) proportionably contracted the discretionary powers with which they were invested. If only abstract principles had been left, uninspired authorities would have been justified in regarding solely these, and regulating the means of conformity to them by their own unbiassed judgment. But the apostolical precedents created a new restriction. Rulers of infallible judgment not only had taught the principle, but the precise method by which that principle was best preserved had been practised by them, and set forth, apparently for the guidance of their less enlightened successors.

Was the Church of all ages bound to follow their track without any deviation? If so, where was any room for discretionary power? If not, on what authority was the deviation to be made, and how far was it authorized? Here the most accurate view of the character and object of the Christian's sacred record is necessary, in order to remove all obscurity from the question. That record, as far as the agency of human ministers is its object, is partly historical, partly legislative. The two terms are not, perhaps, quite expressive of the distinction intended; but, by Scripture being partly legislative, is meant, that it is partly concerned in conveying the rules and principles of religion—the revealed will, in short, of God. It is also partly historical;



and of the historical portion no inconsiderable share is solely or principally a practical illustration of these rules. History and legislation are indeed both blended ; and it is because they are thus connected : but the respective uses of them, as distinct portions of Scripture, are here, as in other questions of a similar nature, very important. When the historical incidents, the *facts* recorded, are recorded as specimens of the fulfilment of God's will, their only authority, as precedents and examples, arises from their conformity to the principle which they illustrate. Now it is conceivable and likely, that a change of circumstances may render a practice inconsistent with such a principle, which originally was most accordant with it, and *vice versâ*. The principle is the fixed point, and the course which has first attained it may become as unsuitable to another who pursues it, as the same line of direction would be for two voyagers who should be steering for the same landmark at different seasons, and with different winds. Still, as in this latter case, the first successful attempt would be, to a certain extent, a guide to those which follow ; and this, exactly in proportion to the skill of the forerunner. The apostles were known to be infallible guides ; and those who immediately succeeded them, and all subsequent ages, are quite sure that they must have pursued that which was, under the existing circumstances, the most direct line to their object,—that, situated as Christianity was in their hands, all their regulations were the

best possible for preserving the principles of the Church-establishment and government. The uninspired Church was therefore bound to follow them, until any apostolical practice should be found inadequate to accomplish its original purpose. Here commence the discretion and responsibility; the first obligation being to maintain the principle according to the best of their judgment, as the prudent steersman alters his track and deviates from the course marked out in his chart, when wind or tide compel him to the deviation.

And thus we shall be at no loss for the precise difference of authority between the precedents of the apostolical and of the primitive uninspired Church. In matters which admit of appeal to the usage of the apostolical Church, we are sure, not only that the measure was wise, but the very wisest; and, accordingly, the only question is, whether its suitableness has been affected by any change of circumstances. On the other hand, in a similar reference to the uninspired Church of any age, the measure is first of all pronounced wise or unwise—lawful or unlawful, as it conduces or not to the maintenance of the revealed principles of ecclesiastical society. And, supposing the measure under consideration be proved to have been so conducive, still it is not at once certain, as in the former case, that it was the wisest and most judicious measure which the existing circumstances required or admitted. It emanated from fallible

wisdom. Accordingly, in canvassing the authority of such a precedent, we are authorized and bound to institute two inquiries;—Was the measure the most accordant with ecclesiastical principles *then*? Is it so *now*? Whereas, in the former appeal to apostolic usage, the only question is, whether it is convenient, now?

There is, however, some qualification to be admitted in this general statement, correct as it is in a general view. The qualifying point is this: in usages for which there is no precise rule or precedent in Scripture, but in which we follow the practice of the ancient Church, there is a difference to be made in the authority of our guide, as the usage can be clearly and decidedly traced to uninspired institution or not. If, looking back through the successive generations of Christians, we find it without date or recorded source, it *may* have been of apostolical origin; and the strength of this claim is in proportion to the distance of the first link in the chain of its history,—in short, to its antiquity,—combined with its apparent wisdom and apostolical character. Such a custom, indeed, may have so great a preponderance of probability in favour of its apostolical origin, as to claim from us nearly the same cautious diffidence in departing from it, which would influence us in canvassing a deviation from the apostolical precedents themselves.

Our immediate inquiry, however, and the point

to which these remarks have been directed, is not concerning the lawful use of *uninspired precedents* by us, but the lawful use of *inspired precedents* by those who first found themselves deprived of the immediate guidance of inspiration. The Church, it was observed, had several distinct offices to fulfil. It was the trustee of holy writ for mankind; and in this character it was called on, agreeably to the will of God, to exert itself for the preservation, and also for the dispensing, of the deposit. The Church was also a means of grace; and out of this arose a new demand on its carefulness, to preserve or to provide such forms as should be best adapted for this purpose. From Scripture and from oral instruction it had been taught the great principles by which the apostles had been directed, under the holy Scriptures, to attain these ends; and it had, moreover, witnessed and practised under the apostles the specified measures which God had pointed out for a due conformity to these ordained principles of His society. Still, as the principles were the end, and the practice which formed the apostolical precedents, the means, and, as such, only precedents so far as they were conducive to that end; the Church was left to the exercise of a discretion, which, whether exercised rightly or abused, could not, or ought not to mislead a succeeding age. Every Christian society, at every period, must, as such, possess the Christian's sacred record; and is, by that, enabled to judge how far others,

or how far it has hitherto itself employed that discretionary power, so that the Church should retain its great scriptural marks—Spirituality, Universality, Unity.

Thus, considering the Church as fulfilling its office of preserving the Scriptures, and of being the channel of evidence to their authenticity, the limit to its discretionary power, in any given instance, is not hard to be discovered ; and we shall scarcely be at a loss to decide on the praise or blame which the apostolical Fathers and their coadjutors deserve on this score from posterity, or on the authority and use of their example. In order to *preserve* the Scriptures, for instance, it would be obviously their duty to promote their general use among Christians, precisely in the form in which they were first deposited as a trust to be preserved. So far from any check being requisite, beyond that implied in the obligation to perpetuate these writings, in order to assure the Church, that however useful for specific purposes it may be, to recast the scriptural truths, and to combine and mould them differently in Homilies, Catechisms, Creeds, and Articles—that, still, it would be unlawful to *substitute* these, however perfect, however completely conveying scriptural truth, for the sacred writings themselves. The New Testament was an estate in trust ; and the trustees had no authority to dispose of the property, however advantageous the transfer might appear. But, although no doubt



could arise on this point ; although it is evident, that in order to preserve the Scriptures, and so to preserve them, that each generation may become a strong evidence to the next of their perpetually admitted authenticity, a very general use of the original Scripture is indispensable ; still, a doubt may arise, as to the obligation of circulating these writings, in their original form, among all ranks and descriptions of persons ; among those, for instance, whose labours or whose history was not likely to descend from one age to another, and thus to furnish the intended evidence. If such a doubt arose, how would it be determined ? Obviously, by observing how far the great foundation principles of the Church would be violated or preserved, as one side or the other was adopted in the question. Looking back to the apostolical course, no historical fact, no precedent would, perhaps, present itself as being precisely a parallel case ; but what could not fail to force itself on the attention, would be, an anxiety expressed in the sacred writings and in the ministry of the inspired teachers, to preserve that distinction between the Christian and the Jewish Church which forbade a *gradation* of privileges amongst its members ; which maintained the breaking down of the partition walls that formerly separated God's Church into classes, each claiming a different proportion of communion, instruction, and whatever else be comprehended under the term divine dispensation ; which taught that there was one law

for all. This reference to the principle of Unity, then, would be sufficient to guide the Church, for the first time, in its distribution of the Scriptures, and would equally suffice to enable any other Church, of any other age, to judge whether it had distributed them rightly or otherwise. No plea, not even an apostolical precedent, (if such a supposition be possible,) would form a ground for withholding, from any portion of the Church, the Scriptures in a language understood by all. This is so, because the principle of unity of dispensation is the fixed mark, by which the apostolical precedents themselves were directed; and any such supposable deviation, could only have arisen from extraordinary variation in the means of attaining that end.

Again, considering the Church in another capacity, as the dispenser of scriptural truth, we naturally find it shaping its measures by an attention to those circumstances, which would render, in each age and society, the Scriptures more easily learned, or less liable to be mistaken. These truths being always the same, there would still be much room for discretionary power, in conveying them to children, or to mature minds; to a cultivated, or to a rude people; to a philosopher, or to the vulgar. As errors and heresies arose, a further modification would take place in the mode of teaching truths once perverted; and these would be, according to the exigency, made more prominent,

more explicit, and be more definitely and securely worded. Catechisms, Creeds, and Articles, would be the natural result of the Church's efforts to do its duty as dispenser of scriptural truth. As a body, likewise, it would, with the same intent, appoint preachers of the word, and dispose the oral and written eloquence of its ministers to bear in the same direction. For the right management of all this, the uninspired Church would often find no parallel or strict precedent in apostolical history, and would act on its own discretion. But here, again, the discretion would not be quite uncontrolled. It would be bound so to act, as to conform to those very fundamental principles of the Church to which the apostles themselves conformed; and, of course, any precedent which was created by this practice, would be first tried by this standard, before it was acknowledged as such. We examine its conformity with those principles at the time, in order to determine whether the practice was then right; we should further calculate on its conformity under all the difference of circumstances between the then and the present condition of the Church, before we admitted it as a lawful precedent.

Accordingly, if these expositions (whether Catechisms, Homilies, or Creeds) claimed any other authority than that of an exposition of Scripture, and a mode of dispensing the Word, a due sense of the Spiritual character of the Church would

furnish an infallible check. It would be, obviously, incompatible with this view to allow any doctrine to proceed from human authority. Supposing the doctrine to be true, still, this does not alter the view of it; the appointed characteristic of the new Church is, that its government is spiritual. Unlike the former Church, it issues its revelations through no succession of mediators, lawgivers, judges, prophets, or kings. Its only medium is the *record of the Spirit*, and the only authority of the Church's doctrines is Scripture.

Nor should we too hastily determine, as many are apt to do, that discredit would attach to the divine character of our religion, if it appeared, in any one instance, to have been generally corrupted so near its source. Even if it were found to be so, this would not affect its claim to a divine origin, much less oblige us to imitate the corruption. In mere human institutions, it may imply want of wisdom and foresight in the founder, that his work should soon have degenerated, and its object be defeated; but this reasoning is not applicable to the divine appointments; at least it does not apply to the condition of the Church more than to any other of these appointments. The same difficulty meets us in the history of the progressive corruption of the human race; in the backslidings of God's chosen people, the Jews; and it is what we have reason to look for even in the last dispensation itself, from the prophetic warning of its in-

spired founders. It is a difficulty which resolves itself into the inexplicable question concerning the existence of evil. The general corruption of the Christian world, at any past period, ought to be considered rather as a presumption that the Church is assisted by God; and this the more, the earlier such corruption occurred. It is so for this reason. When the old world first began to corrupt religion, we know that men plunged deeper and deeper into error. When the Jews began to disobey the Law and to practise idolatry, we see plainly from their history that the like fate would have befallen them. And why did it not? *Because God continually interposed.* What then but a corresponding, though insensible, divine guardianship can account for what has taken place in the Church of Christ—reformation? That it should have occurred otherwise, is contrary to all that has ever happened, according to the religious history of mankind in every age.

To the rulers of the Church, viewed in its sacramental character, as the temple of the Holy Ghost, and the medium of divine grace, a discretionary power was likewise left, and likewise subject to a limitation which could never be fairly misunderstood. For the attainment of this object, certain forms and ceremonies were requisite; in which Christians, as such, join, and through which, as members of a community, grace was to be imparted. To Christians, as a society, the promise of the Spirit was



made ; and, accordingly, to them, as a society, it was to be conveyed. The apostles had begun and established precedents, which, of course, would be naturally adopted by their uninspired successors. But still, as these were only the formal means of grace, and not the blessing itself, it was equally to be expected that the Church should assume a discretionary power, whenever the means established became impracticable or clearly unsuitable, and either substitute others, or even altogether abolish such as existed. At the same time, so great a license would leave the Church liable to be disturbed by the caprice of mankind ; and it was accordingly quite necessary that the boundary of its liberty should be strongly marked. The obvious line is this : the appointments made by the apostles had a twofold object, some were designed to convey extraordinary gifts, some ordinary. Whatever form was instituted by them for conveying extraordinary gifts, was evidently not to be continued by the uninspired Church ; at least not with the original purpose in view. As to the other appointments, it might seem at first that the apostolical precedents were literally binding on all ages ; but this cannot have been intended, and for this reason, that the greater portion of the apostolical practices have been transmitted to us, not on apostolical authority, but on the authority of the uninspired Church : which has handed them down with an uncertain mixture of its own appointments. How are we to know the

enactments of the inspired rulers from those of the uninspired? and, if there be no certain clue, we must either bring down the authority of apostolical usage to that of the uninspired Church, or raise that of the uninspired Church to that of the apostolical. Now the former is, doubtless, what was, to a certain extent, intended by the apostles themselves, as will appear from a line of distinction by which they have carefully partitioned off such of their appointments as are designed to be perpetual, from such as are left to share the possibility of change with the institutions of uninspired wisdom. If then we look to the account of the Christian usages contained in Scripture, nothing can be more unquestionable, than that while some are specified, others are passed over in silence. It is not even left so as to make us imagine that those mentioned may be all; but, while some are noted specifically, the establishment of others is implied, without the particular mode of observance being given. Thus, we are equally sure from Scripture, that Christian ministers were ordained by a certain form, and that Christians assembled in prayer; but while the precise process of laying on of hands is mentioned in the former institution, no account is given of the precise method of Church Service, or even of any regular forms of prayer, beyond the Lord's Prayer. Even the record of the Ordination Service itself admits of the same distinction. It is quite as certain that some prayer was used, as that some

outward form accompanied the prayer; but the form is specified, the prayer left unrecorded. What now is the obvious interpretation of the holy Dispenser's meaning in this mode of record? Clearly it is, that the apostles regulated under his guidance the forms and practices of the Church, so as was best calculated to convey grace to the Church at that time. At the same time, part of its institutions were of a nature, which, although formal, would never require a change; and these therefore were left recorded in the Scriptures to mark the distinction of character. The others were not, indeed, to be capriciously abandoned, not at all, except when there should be manifest cause for so doing; but as such a case was supposable, these were left to mingle with the uninspired precedents, the claims of which, as precedents, would be increased by this uncertain admixture, and the authority of the whole rendered so far binding, and so far subject to the discretion of the Church. They might not be altered, unless sufficient grounds should appear; but the settling of this point was left to the discretion of the Church; and this discretion, again, was subject to the check above described, as arising out of the well-defined characteristics of the Church.

Among the methods of divine grace, the Sacraments, of course, are distinguished as having been the appointment of our blessed Lord himself. As far, however, as their permanent claim extends, in common with that of other institutions, to be cele-

brated according to all the form found in Scripture, the foregoing general remarks are sufficient. It will be time enough to enter more fully into this particular branch of inquiry, when we arrive at it in the detail of the practices of the primitive Church ; for the better estimate of which, this previous view has been taken.

## CHAP. III.

A. D. 100—167.

HOW FAR THE DESIGN OF THE CHURCH'S INSPIRED  
FOUNDERS WAS PRESERVED AND FOLLOWED UP BY  
THE FIRST UNINSPIRED CHURCHES, OR THEIR RULERS.

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OF the three leading questions, whereby it was proposed to elicit a view of the primitive Church, two have been briefly, but, perhaps, sufficiently discussed. We have now seen, first, what parts of the apostles' ministry were intended for the *foundation* of Christianity, and next, what parts were intended for its *preservation* and *application*. The third inquiry remains, How far was the design of the Church's inspired founders preserved and followed up by the first uninspired Churches or their rulers?

As this can only be satisfactorily answered by a detail of the proceedings of the primitive Church—so far, at least, as those proceedings are known to us—little more will be requisite in most instances, than to observe such an arrangement of these historical facts, as shall connect them with the general view to which they refer. This arrangement will be formed in reference to the view already taken of



the character of the Church and its several offices ; so as that each point of ecclesiastical history necessary for our purpose, may be brought under one of these four heads.

I. How the first uninspired Church fulfilled its office of preserving and attesting the *sacred record*.

II. How the first uninspired Church fulfilled its office of *dispensing* the truths contained in this sacred record.

III. How the first uninspired Church fulfilled its office of *conveying divine grace*.

IV. How far its *discipline*, or method of self-preservation, was conformable to the design of its inspired founders.

*I. How the first uninspired Church fulfilled its office of PRESERVING and ATTESTING the sacred record.*

One of the preceding remarks on the uses of the Church was, that it was designed to be to the sacred record, what an inspired order of ministers had been to the unrecorded revelation. Revelation was withdrawn, and Scripture left in its room. As Revelation had been secured against misrepresentation or curtailment, by divine suggestion and correction, and also attested to be divine by signs, wonders, and spiritual gifts ; so, in the establishment of the Church, we see a corresponding provision made for the preservation of the Scriptures, and also for a

perpetual testimony to their authenticity. Among the means whereby this was effected, the principal have been:

1. *The public reading of the Scriptures.*

It is not to the utility of this practice as a mode of promulgating the divine truths of the Gospel, that I am now alluding ; but to its effect in preventing the loss or corruption of the sacred record itself, in any, or in all societies of Christians ; and also in keeping up a perpetual testimony to its divine authority, of which evidence the Church was the especial and appointed vehicle. The value of the practice, in this point of view, can only be justly estimated by recollecting, how much more difficult it was to keep up a chain of evidence to the identity of a record such as this, (in which the smallest doubt was likely to vitiate the claim of the whole,) before reading was common ; and still more, before the art of printing was invented. The language of Scripture continually sounding in the ears of Christians of all classes, would leave no interval for the introduction of false records. The Church would thus keep up a familiarity with its divine guide, which might be compared to that which holy men of old, probably, acquired with any particular mode of divine communication from the frequency of their revelations. They learned to know the voice of the Lord God, and could not be imposed on by a lying

spirit. And so, doubtless, it was intended, that the written word of God should be made continually to speak to his Church, in order that his Church never may be subject to delusion from the cunning devices of impostors.

That the primitive Church contemplated this purpose, in its careful observance of the usage, need not be made a question. It is, indeed, probable that its main object was the instruction thereby afforded. But, granting this to be so, neither in this nor in any other of the Christian practices, was it requisite that the whole or the main design of the Church's divine Ruler should have been comprehended by his obedient ministers. The apostles themselves, perhaps, saw not the full operation and progressive results of their own plans; and we, at this moment, may be cherishing among the rites and ordinances of Christianity some, the full effect of which it may be reserved to future times, to a period beyond this world, to develope. It is impossible to say, how far we are living by faith and not by sight.

As far back as we can trace any accounts, incidental or direct, of the service of the primitive Church, the public reading of the Scriptures is recognized. Even the minute arrangement of particular portions for particular seasons was observed. Occasional deviations too from the general practice of the Christian world are known to us. As, for instance, that for the first four hundred years, the

Romish Church confined itself to the public reading of the New Testament, to the exclusion of the Old<sup>a</sup>. That in the observance of this duty, something more was felt than a desire for instruction,—some respect and veneration, in short, for the deposit intrusted to their care, and an anxious wish to attach to its preservation every solemn circumstance, may be inferred from the custom which long generally prevailed, of rising when the Gospel was read<sup>b</sup>; and also from the words with which its reading was prefaced, “Thus saith the Lord.” It denoted a feeling that Scripture was the appointed substitute for what had in times past taken place, “God speaking in divers manners;” and a scrupulous respect for it, as for the new Shechinah.

The object of this custom would clearly have been defeated, had the Scriptures been read in a tongue unknown to the congregation. Without any direct testimony therefore to this point, we should naturally take it for granted, that the word of God was read in a language “understood of the

<sup>a</sup> Strabo, de Reb. Eccl. c. 12, cited by Stillingfleet, in his Orig. Britan. c. ix.

<sup>b</sup> Constitutions, lib. ii. c. 57. See also Chrysostom, Hom. 1. in Matth. Sozomen (lib. vii. c. 19.) notices it as a peculiarity of the Alexandrian Church, that the bishop did not conform to this custom. St. Jerom records a custom in the Eastern Churches, of ushering in the Gospel with lighted candles. Cave, however, doubts the primitive antiquity of this practice; and there is certainly no reason to suppose that it was universal. See Bingham's Eccl. Antiq. book xiv. c. iii. sec. 11.

people." But, it is clearly ascertained, that for the convenience of those Churches wherein the original of the Scriptures was unintelligible, translations were early made and used<sup>c</sup>; as early, perhaps, as the close of the first century; and what is, perhaps, no less conclusive than direct testimony, is the inference to be deduced from the language of the apostolical Fathers in their Epistles to different Churches. In these, the writers are addressing themselves to each Church as a body, and appealing continually to the words of the Gospels and Epistles, as to documents with which those addressed are supposed to be familiar. Now as the greater portion of every Church cannot be imagined, at that time certainly, to have had copies of the Scriptures in their hands, or even to have learned to read, this habitual familiarity with its texts could only have been acquired by the public reading of them<sup>d</sup>.

<sup>c</sup> See the ancient testimonies cited in Bingham's *Eccl. Antiq.* book xiii. c. iv. Justin Martyr is the earliest.

<sup>d</sup> It appears from Eusebius, that in the age of Constantine there was a custom established, of leaving in each Church one or more copies of the Bible for the use of those who could read, and who might wish to refer to it. The emperor himself is said to have been in the habit of using them, (see Eusebius, *Vit. Constant.* lib. iv. c. 17.) There is extant a distich of Paulinus, which was written by him on the walls of the *Secretarium* of the Church of Nola, in allusion to this custom:

*Si quem sancta tenet meditandi in Lege voluntas  
Hic poterit residens sacris intendere libris.*

Paulin. *Epist. ad Severum*, cited by Bingham, *Eccles. Antiq.* b. viii. c. 6.



In support of what is alleged, we may refer, for instance, to Clement's first Epistle to the Corinthians<sup>e</sup>, wherein he introduces a quotation from St. Luke's Gospel, with "*Remember* the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, 'woe to that man by whom offences come, &c.'" So, too, Polycarp to the Philippians<sup>f</sup>, "*Remembering* what the Lord taught us;" which is followed by another exact citation from St. Luke's Gospel: but this is, indeed, the tone and spirit which pervades the writings of the apostolical Fathers.

2. *Quotations from, and allusions to, the Scriptures of the New Testament, in the writings of the Apostolical Fathers.*

In this very custom of quoting the words of Scripture in all their writings, we may perceive another mode in which the Church and its rulers became the vehicle of evidence to the sacred record, and the means of preserving it pure. When Clement or Ignatius cites a passage of St. Luke or St. Paul as inspired, the citation serves at once the purpose of preserving to posterity their testimony to the inspired character of the writings, and of enabling us to identify those writings with such as have been transmitted to us as Scripture. In no respect is the testimonial office of the Church more apparent than in this. During

<sup>e</sup> Chap. xliv.

<sup>f</sup> Chap. ii.

a period of nearly 1800 years, the Church of one age has been thus passing on the memorial of its own conviction and satisfaction to another. Like a chain of heralds stationed over a wide extent of country for the purpose of transmitting some great and urgent tidings; one generation has written, what may be called, the telegraph of its own conviction to the next; and thus it has passed on even unto us. Let no one, therefore, blame the zeal which incites numbers still to tread the same ground with their predecessors; to write on the same topics on which *they* have written, even without the design of superseding their labours, or the ambition of rivalling them. He who has left to the world a statement of his belief in any Gospel truth, and in the authenticity of the record which preserves it, if his writings but remain to another generation, will have borne a part in one of the most important offices of that great society to which he belongs. His writings will have served to swell the voice, that speaks out, according to the appointment of Providence, from one station of time unto another; and which must continue to be heard till time shall be no more.

Out of those writings of the apostolical Fathers which are commonly selected as genuine, the following quotations from, and allusions to, the New Testament Scriptures, may serve to shew in what way those writings attest the genuineness of our Canon; and a reference to the context

in each instance, will enable us further to judge how far these Fathers applied the Scriptures, according to what we consider to be their true import and intent<sup>s</sup>.

## CLEMENT.

### *First Epistle to the Corinthians.*

Chap. xiii. "Remembering the words of the Lord Jesus, which he spake concerning equity<sup>b</sup> and long-suffering, saying, Be ye merciful, and ye shall obtain mercy: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven: as ye do, so shall it be done unto you; as ye give, so shall it be given unto you: as ye judge, so shall ye be judged: as ye are kind to others, so shall God be kind to you: with what measure ye mete, with the same shall it be measured to you again." Compare Matthew vii. 1, 6. and Luke vi. 36—38.

Chap. xxxvi. "This is the way, beloved, in which we may find our Saviour, even Jesus Christ, the High Priest of all our offerings. By him would

<sup>s</sup> These passages are from Archbishop Wake's version. Wherever it fails to give the full sense of the original, the deviation is noticed at the bottom of the page.

<sup>b</sup> Ἐπιείκειαν, meekness, forbearance, mercy. Even δικαιοσύνη was so applied, as in 2 Cor. ix. 9. Ἡ δικαιοσύνη αὐτοῦ μένει εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα. In Matt. i. 19. Ἰωσήφ δὲ ὁ ἀνὴρ αὐτῆς δικαίος ὢν, should be rendered, Joseph, her husband, being a mild or merciful man. Might not δικαιοσύνη, δικαιοῦ, although always rendered "justified" and "to justify," have been sometimes intended to convey a similar meaning?

God have us to taste the knowledge of immortality, who being the brightness of his glory<sup>1</sup>, is by so much greater than the angels, as he has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. For so it is written. Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire. But to his Son<sup>k</sup>, thus saith the Lord: Thou art my Son, to-day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the utmost parts of the earth for thy possession. And, again, he saith unto him: Sit thou on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool." Compare Hebrews i. 3—13.

Chap. xxxvii. "Let us for example take our body; the head without the feet is nothing, neither the feet without the head. And even the smallest members of our body are yet both necessary and useful to the whole body. But all conspire together, and are subject to one common use<sup>l</sup>, namely, the preservation of the whole body." Compare St. Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians, chap. xii.

Chap. xlv. "Why do we rend and tear in pieces the members of Christ; and raise seditions

<sup>1</sup> Ἀπαύγασμα τῆς μεγαλωσύνης αὐτοῦ, "the brightness of his majesty;" the word μεγαλωσύνης occurring in the same verse, was very naturally substituted by one quoting, as Clement probably did, from memory. See v. 3. in the passage alluded to.

<sup>k</sup> Ἐπὶ δὲ τῷ Υἱῷ αὐτοῦ, "in reference to his Son."

<sup>l</sup> Ὑποταγῇ μιᾷ χρεῖται εἰς τὸ σώζεσθαι ὅλον, "all practise submission, that they may be preserved as a whole."

against our own body?—Are we come to such a height of madness, as to forget that we are members one of another? Remember the words of our Lord Jesus, how he said, Wo to that man by whom offences come<sup>m</sup>! It were better for him that he had never been born, than that he should have offended one of my elect. It were better for him that a millstone should be tied about his neck, and he should be cast into the sea, than that he should offend one of my little ones.” Compare Matthew xviii. 6. Mark ix. 42. Luke xvii. 1, 2.

Chap. xlvii. “Take the Epistle of the blessed Paul the apostle into your hands. What was it that he wrote to you at his first preaching the Gospel among you<sup>n</sup>? Verily, he did by the Spirit admonish you, concerning himself and Cephas, and Apollos, because that even then ye had begun to fall into parties and factions among yourselves.” Compare St. Paul’s First Epistle to the Corinthians, especially chap. i. 11, 12.

Chap. xlix. “Charity covers the<sup>o</sup> multitude of sins: charity endures all things, is long-suffering

<sup>m</sup> The latter part of the sentence is not in the original.

<sup>n</sup> Ἐν ἀρχῇ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου. Compare Philip. iv. 15. Οἶδατε δὲ καὶ ὑμεῖς Φιλιππησίοι, ὅτι ἐν ἀρχῇ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου, ὅτε ἐξῆλθον ἀπὸ Μακεδονίας οὐδὲμία μοι ἐκκλησία ἐκοινώνησεν, κ. τ. λ. Ecclesiastical writers use the phrase in the same sense.

<sup>o</sup> The article is wanting, as is the case in the original expression of St. Peter, from whom it was, doubtless, borrowed.



in all things. There is nothing base and sordid<sup>p</sup> in charity. Charity lifts not itself up above others; admits of no divisions; is not seditious; but does all things in peace and concord. By charity were all the elect of God made perfect<sup>q</sup>." Compare St. Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians, chap. xiii. 7, &c.

### IGNATIUS.

*Epistle to the Ephesians*, chap. xii. "You are the companions of Paul in the mysteries<sup>r</sup> of the Gospel, the holy, the martyr, the deservedly most happy Paul, who throughout all his Epistle makes mention of you in Christ Jesus." Compare St. Paul to the Ephesians, especially chap. iii. 3—9.

*Same Epistle*, chap. xviii. "The doctrine of the cross is a scandal<sup>s</sup> to unbelievers, but to us

<sup>p</sup> Οὐδὲν βάνανσον ἐν ἀγάπῃ, οὐδὲν ὑπερήφανον. "Display" would have expressed the meaning of βάνανσον more exactly. Aristotle, in his Ethics, makes βαναυσία the excess of μεγαλοπρέπεια, see lib. ii. c. 7. and lib. iv. c. 2. Ὁ βάνανσος, τῷ παρὰ τὸ δῖον ἀναλίσκειν, ὑπερβάλλει, ἐν γὰρ τοὺς μικροῖς τῶν δαπανήματων πολλὰ ἀναλίσκοι, καὶ λαμπρύνεται παρὰ μέλος. Οἷον ἱεραιστὰς γαμικῶς ἱστοῖαν. Clement, doubtless, intended to express St. Paul's ἡ ἀγάπη οὐ περιτερεύεται, οὐ φυσιοῦται.

<sup>q</sup> Ἐτελειώθησαν, "have been made perfect."

<sup>r</sup> Συμμέσται, persons initiated in the same mysteries. It is an allusion to the apostle's language, concerning the call of the Gentiles, which he speaks of as "the mystery which was kept secret since the world began, but now is made manifest." See more especially Ephes. iii. 3—9.

<sup>s</sup> "A stumbling block."

is salvation and life eternal. Where is the wise man? Where is the disputer? Where is the boasting of those who are called wise?" Compare First Epistle to the Corinthians, chap. i. 18—20.

*Epistle to the Magnesians*, chap. x. "Lay aside therefore the old, and sour, and evil leaven, and be ye changed into the new leaven, which is Jesus Christ." Compare St. Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians, chap. v. 7, 8.

*Smyrnæans*, chap. i. "Our Lord Jesus Christ, who truly was of the race of David according to the flesh, but the Son of God according to the will and power of God." Compare Epistle to the Romans, chap. i. 3, 4.

*Epistle to Polycarp*, chap. v. "Exhort my brethren, that they love their wives, even as the Lord the Church." Compare St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians, chap. v. 25.

## POLYCARP.

### *Epistle to the Philippians.*

Chap. iii. "Paul, who being himself in person with those who then lived<sup>u</sup>, did with all exactness and soundness teach the word of truth, and being gone from you, wrote an Epistle<sup>x</sup> to you; into

<sup>u</sup> 'Ε, ὑμῖν omitted; "those of you who then lived" would have expressed it.

<sup>x</sup> Ἐπιστολάς. Lardner understands him to speak of the Epistles to the Thessalonians, as well as that to the Philippians, (see Credibil. b. i. c. 6.) Cotelerius, in his note on the word, cites Eusebius and other authorities, to shew that the word is some-

which, if you look, you will be able to edify yourselves in the faith, which has been delivered unto you." Compare St. Paul's Epistle to the Philippians.

Chap. i. "Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death." Compare Acts ii. 24.

Chap. ii. "Wherefore girding up the loins of your mind<sup>y</sup>, serve the Lord with fear." Compare St. Peter, 1 Epistle i. 13.

*Ibid.* "Remembering what the Lord has taught us, saying, 'Judge not, and ye shall not be judged<sup>z</sup>; forgive, and ye shall be forgiven.' Be ye merciful, and ye shall obtain mercy<sup>a</sup>: for<sup>b</sup> with the same measure that you mete withal, it shall be measured to you again. And again, 'Blessed are the poor, for theirs is the kingdom of God.'" Compare Luke vi. 36—38. Matt. v. 3. vii. 1, 2.

Chap. iv. "The love of money is the root of all evil<sup>c</sup>. Knowing therefore, that as we brought

times used in the plural for a single Epistle. This is partly true. The plural of ἐπιστολή may be so used as *not to imply* more letters than one, but not, like the Latin *literæ*, to express one letter. The translation therefore is not quite correct. It should be "Paul, &c. wrote to you, and, if you will refer to *what he wrote*." The circumstance of its being one or more Epistles, is not intended to be expressed.

<sup>y</sup> "Of your mind," not in the original.

<sup>z</sup> ἵνα μὴ κριθῆτε, in order that ye may not be judged.

<sup>a</sup> ἵνα ἐλεηθῆτε, in order that ye may obtain mercy.

<sup>b</sup> "For," not in the original.

<sup>c</sup> Πάντων χαλεπῶν, "all difficulties." Polycarp must have made the quotation with that expression of our Saviour in his mind,

nothing into the world, so neither may we carry any thing out," &c. Compare St. Paul's First Epistle to Timothy vi. 7, 10.

Chap. v. "Every such lust<sup>d</sup> warreth against the Spirit; and neither fornicators, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, shall inherit the kingdom of God." Compare First Epistle of St. Peter ii. 11; and 1 Corinthians vi. 9, 10.

Chap. vi. "We must all stand before the judgment seat of Christ, and shall every one give an account of himself." Compare St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans xiv. 10, 12.

Chap. vii. "Whosoever does not confess that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, he is antichrist." Compare 1 St. John iv. 3.

Chap. viii. "Jesus Christ, who his ownself bare our sins in his own body on the tree; who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth; but suffered all for us, that we might live through him." Compare 1 Peter ii. 22—24.

Chap. ix. "Keep yourselves from all evil. For he that in these things cannot govern himself, how shall he be able to prescribe *them*<sup>e</sup> to another.

"How *hardly* shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God." "It is *easier* for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." (Luke xviii. 24, 25.)

<sup>d</sup> Πᾶσα ἐπιθυμία, "every lust."

<sup>e</sup> *Hoc*, "this," the rule, namely, which follows, "If a man does not," &c. agreeably to our Lord's language, as recorded by St.

If a man does not keep himself from covetousness, he shall be followed with idolatry, and be judged as if he were a Gentile. But who of you are ignorant of God? Do we not know, that ‘the saints shall judge the world,’ as Paul teaches? But I have neither perceived nor heard any thing of this kind in you, among whom the blessed Paul laboured, and who are named in the beginning of that Epistle; for the glories of you, in all the Churches who then only knew God.” Compare St. Paul’s First Epistle to the Thessalonians v. 22. Ephesians v. 5. Colossians ii. 5. 1 Corinthians vi. 2. Philippians i.

Chap. xii. “I trust that ye are well exercised in the holy Scriptures, and that nothing is hid from you<sup>f</sup>; but at present, it is not granted unto me to practise that which is written<sup>g</sup>. ‘Be angry,

Matthew and St. Luke, “How canst thou say to thy brother, Brother, let me pull out the mote that is in thine eye, when thou thyself beholdest not the beam that is in thine own eye.” Luke vi. 42. Matt. vii. 4.

<sup>f</sup> (*Et nihil vos latet.*) The translator seems to have read *latere*.

<sup>g</sup> The sentence, as it stands in the original, is obscure. *Mihi autem non concessum est, modo*, seems rather to refer to the assiduous study of the Scriptures, which he had been recommending in the words immediately preceding. *Ut his Scripturis dictum est*, begins another period, and the quotations denoted are those which follow, “Be ye angry, and sin not; let not the sun go down upon your wrath.” This passage so arranged, (and it is the most natural arrangement,) proves two things; first, that the New Testament was appealed to as *Scripture*,—as a *written record*,—by Polycarp; secondly, that it comprehended already, beyond the sacred narratives, at least the Epistle to the



and sin not ;' and again, ' Let not the sun go down upon your wrath.' " Compare Ephesians iv. 26.

It has been observed by some, that although, in most of these and the like instances, the citations are sufficiently correct to preclude all doubt of their being taken from the very parts of Scripture to which they are assigned ; yet, that in a few, the meaning, and not the exact words, is given : and, again, that quotations are made, which it is difficult to accommodate to any part of the Canon. This is

Ephesians. For, although it may be said that the former part of the quotation, " Be ye angry, and sin not," may have been cited from the book of Psalms immediately ; yet the other words are only to be found in the New Testament ; and being there coupled with the former, there can be no doubt that the whole was intended as a quotation from the same passage. Ignatius, even, makes more than one apparent allusion to a collection of the New Testament Scriptures, *e. g.* *Ep. ad Philad.* sect. 8. " Certain persons declared in my hearing, ' I believe nothing which may not be found in the ancients (or the archives\*.)' " On my saying, " It is written there," they answered, " The point is proved." Again, in the same Epistle, sect. 5. we read, " Fleeing to the Gospel as to the body of Christ, and to the apostles, as to the presbytery of the Church. At the same time, let us respect the prophets, for they announced to mankind, that we were to believe in the Gospel and in him, and to expect him." Now as the writer evidently meant by " the prophets," the writings of the prophets, (under which denomination he might have comprehended all the inspired writings of the Old Testament,) the most natural interpretation of the terms " Gospel," and " apostles," is " the recorded Gospel," and " the writings of the apostles."

\* There are two readings, ἀρχαίαις and ἀρχαίοις.

noticed, because it is sometimes urged as detracting from the authority of the Fathers; in the present application of their writings. There is, in truth, however, something highly natural in this inaccurate mode of quotation used by the apostolical Fathers. They were, it should be remembered, instructed, not from Scripture; not from a record, but from the oral teaching of the apostles themselves. The very words in which they first heard many of the Gospel truths, which they afterwards impressed on their congregations, must, beyond a doubt, have been in many instances different from the expressions of the record. To them, accordingly, these would be most natural, and would often, in the earnestness of their exhortation, be inadvertently adopted in preference to the scriptural language. This is not only possible, but what, under their circumstances, we should expect to take place: and there is therefore no occasion for attempting to solve the difficulty, either by supposing any portion of the holy Testament to have perished under the Church's keeping; or by attributing to these writers the habit of occasionally confounding the uninspired with the inspired works of that age.

#### *Collection of the New Testament Scriptures.*

There is yet another point of view, in which the Church may be regarded as a vehicle for preserving the record of revelation, and also for attesting it,

in collecting, namely, the several inspired writings into one body. It has already been pointed out, that of the two distinct kinds of writing of which the New Testament is composed, each has its proper use, and reference to the other. The narrative, separated from the Epistles, would be like the testimonial character of an apostle disjoined from the ministry of the Spirit. The history of the facts of the Gospel-scheme required an exposition of their import; and this exposition, again, would have been useless without the history. To preserve, therefore, the record of revelation pure and perfect, it was necessary, that, although composed of portions, which could only be gradually collected and put together, it should be so combined and so preserved as one. At what time this collection was completed, cannot be certainly ascertained, although there is every reason to think that it was not later than the middle of the second century; and, consequently, before the decease of all the apostolical Fathers. That it was begun, even before the death of St. John, is more certainly inferred; and, probably, from his sanction to the three Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, and the addition of his own to the number, we may date the commencement of this important work<sup>1</sup>. That the feeling with which it was undertaken has never ceased to influence all the Church, may,

<sup>1</sup> See p. 89.

perhaps, be not unfairly presumed from the scruple which still exists, against publishing separately the writings of the New Testament. The Revelations of St. John is, perhaps, the only book that has been commonly edited apart ; and the peculiar character of that work may sufficiently account for its being made an exception. With regard to the rest, it would, doubtless, somewhat offend and startle Christians, to see the *Works* of St. Paul, or St. Luke, or St. John, generally printed and circulated apart from the venerable body of Scriptures, in connection with which it is that each is most valuable.

Nor is this view at all inconsistent with the fact, that so many of the manuscript copies of the New Testament contain only the Gospels, or the Gospels and the Acts. The collection of the whole volume must have been gradual, and the New Testament of every Church at one period imperfect,—in the earliest times containing generally no more than the supposed original collection, that of the Gospels. Now, although the ancient catalogues and the assertions of the Fathers prove, that these alone did not constitute the holy book of any Church ; still, the original imperfect Testaments would be preserved, and the copiers transcribe them, separately from the portions gradually added to each. It may, too, have arisen from some arrangement respecting the reading of the Lessons, with a view to which a divided copy would have been convenient. Such a

convenience appears, certainly, to have given rise to those MSS. which are called *Lectionaries*, from the circumstance of their containing the Scriptures in detached Lessons, as they were appointed to be read in the public services.

But if this has been the prevailing tone of feeling in the Church of all ages, how is it, it may be asked, that the records of the Church should leave any grounds for the disputes, which have existed among later Christians, concerning the extent of the Canon? Granting that the labours of the learned have been successful in ejecting many spurious writings from their assumed place in the New Testament<sup>k</sup>, and in establishing others, the claims of which were doubtful; still, does not this very circumstance denote greater carelessness in the primitive Church, than the foregoing view supposes?

Contradictory statements certainly do exist: and yet the general tone and manner in which all these statements are delivered, (independently of any explanation from other parts of the same author's writings,) leave a strong impression on the inquirer's mind, that the great Christian body was originally unanimous in its decision. Viewing the collected evidence, or even the separate portions of it, it is impossible not to feel, that the authors are, for the most part, recording, not their individual opinions

<sup>k</sup> See Jones's Canon of the New Testament.



alone, but the sense and voice of Christians generally. This leads us at once to suspect, that these contradictions are apparent and not real; and requiring only a more complete view of the circumstances attending the formation of the Canon, in order to be explained and reconciled. In the absence of direct historical information, recourse must be had, not indeed to mere conjecture, but to the most probable opinion which can be founded on the nature of the case.

Whatever test was originally applied, to separate the true from the counterfeit Scriptures, there can be no question as to the object of the investigation, *viz.* Whether a work claiming to be Scripture was, or was not, inspired. Assuming this then as the ultimate aim of all the inquiries which could have taken place, let us consider what would be the natural and necessary steps by which men would advance to their conclusion.

A work is circulated, as the production of St. Paul or St. Barnabas. Obviously, the first question would be, Is he really the author? It is immaterial to the argument at present, by what process of proof the conclusion might be gained,—whether by tradition, the characters of the MSS.<sup>1</sup>, or any com-

<sup>1</sup> The autograph of St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians, for instance, might have been recognized by the peculiarity alluded to in chap. vi. 11.

bination of external and internal evidence. According as it was found to be so or not, the work would thus far be pronounced genuine or spurious.

In either case, the inquiry would not rest here. Supposing the true author to have been ascertained, before an infallible authority could be conceded to his work, it would be requisite further to know that he was inspired to write it. Here then would be a new line of inquiry, and a new conclusion to be sought.

On the other hand, the circumstance of the work having been falsely ascribed to St. Paul or St. Barnabas, would be no conclusive evidence against its scriptural character. Its author might accidentally, or even designedly, have remained unknown; and still, if satisfactory evidence could be obtained, that the apostles, or other competent<sup>m</sup> judges, had pronounced it inspired, its scriptural character would stand precisely on the same footing, as if the work had been traced to an author known to be inspired<sup>n</sup>. Yet, in one sense, such a writing would be spurious. It would be genuine, considered with reference to the Canon, but spurious considered with reference to its authorship. Thus there would exist two prin-

<sup>m</sup> i. e. rendered competent by extraordinary endowments of the Spirit.

<sup>n</sup> The Epistle to the Hebrews might have been so circumstanced for a time; the prejudice of the Jewish converts generally against the author, being an obvious reason why his name should not be at first attached to it.

ciples of classification, little likely to interfere and create any confusion in the minds of those to whom all the circumstances of the investigation were familiar ; but for that very reason, the less carefully distinguished in their statements. The terms “ spurious,” and “ genuine,” “ acknowledged,” and “ doubted,” would be often applied indiscriminately to both cases, to the uncanonical, and to the misappropriated ; and this, without any surmise of the misapprehension and perplexity which might arise in after ages. To him who wrote it, especially in the case of a casual remark, such a latitude of expression would seem determinate enough, because it would be so at the time in which it was written ; however obscure and unsatisfactory it might become in the lapse of a few centuries, or even in a much shorter period.

Pursuing the same course of inquiry, we shall find the probability increasing, that this has sometimes been the case. Let it then have been satisfactorily made out, that the work in question was the production of an inspired author ; and, further, let that author have been certainly ascertained ; a scruple might still exist as to its purity—its entire freedom, not from corruption merely, but from the liability to be corrupted. Other writings, so situated, might retain a value, diminished only in proportion to the injury they have met with from the hands through which they have been transmitted ; but, grant any alteration to have taken place in an inspired

work, since it received the sanction of inspiration ; grant that the point be even uncertain ; and all its value as Scripture,—as an infallible guide,—is destroyed. Ninety-nine parts out of the hundred may be assuredly of divine origin, but if the spurious particle be so blended with it, as to be inseparable—if it be impossible to point out where the additions have been made, the whole is in point of authority no more than equivalent to a counterfeit throughout. For what security would there be in any given instance, that it was not the fallible judgment of men, and of designing men too, to which the appeal was made ? At the same time, such a work would be respected and used by the Church with the necessary cautions ; and might thus be handed down to posterity, described in unguarded phraseology, as genuine and yet spurious, acknowledged and yet doubted,—as “ genuine ” and “ undoubted,” because it assuredly was the production of the reputed author ; as “ spurious ” and “ doubted,” because containing, or likely to contain, an admixture of spurious ingredients. It would, in short, be spoken of in the language which we hear applied to the original of a great artist ; the value of which, as such, has been destroyed, and its very title to originality brought in question, by the touches of some meaner hand.

It is well known, that the Epistle to the Hebrews, the Second Epistle of St. James, the Second of St. Peter, the Second and Third of St. John, that of

Jude, and the Revelations, are not always found in the old manuscript copies of the New Testament; nor are their names invariably recorded in the catalogues of the old writers. Various epithets, also, and expressions denoting hesitation or rejection, are occasionally applied to them. Nevertheless, no candid inquirer doubts that they are all Scripture, and that they were from the earliest times so considered. First, because in almost all, if not in every authority, which furnishes the doubtful expression, or makes the suspicious omission, some statement is found incompatible with the notion, that the author had rejected the piece on the score of its being uninspired. Take, *e. g.* the most ancient catalogue of the Scriptures now extant, that of Origen<sup>o</sup>. In this, no mention is made of the Epistles of James and Jude; although in other parts of his writings their authority is acknowledged. Again, Jerome's<sup>p</sup> catalogue contains expressions of doubt, respecting the Epistle to the Hebrews; yet there are passages<sup>q</sup> from the same author, which prove indisputably, that he made use of it as Scripture. In these and the like instances,

<sup>o</sup> Origen, Comment. in Matt. apud Euseb. Hist. Eccl. lib. vi. c. 25. Origen, Exposit. in Joann. lib. v. apud Euseb. *ibid*.

<sup>p</sup> Jerome, Epist. ad Paulin. de Stud. Script.

<sup>q</sup> *E. g.* in Epist. ad Sabinianum lapsum, where he quotes Heb. vii. 8. and in his Commentary on the twenty-second chapter of Isaiah, where he speaks of the "heavenly Jerusalem" as the expression of an apostle; not to mention his paraphrase or commentary on the Epistle itself.



it is impossible not to attribute the apparent inconsistency to some unrecorded circumstances, attending the settlement of the Canon, such as have been here suggested.

Secondly, reasonable and satisfactory as this method of interpretation is, (for it is like a cross examination of an author respecting his evidence,) it is not, and never was, be it remembered, the only clue for distinguishing the true Scripture from the false, whenever the two have been confounded in the same doubtful testimony. By comparing such writings with the great body of the New Testament, of which no doubt of any kind was ever expressed, we may safely pronounce them inspired or not, according to their agreement or disagreement with these. But it is worthy of notice, that this test is only applicable to a work which has some presumption in its favour derived from other sources. If otherwise applied, it is, in fact, no test, no medium of proof at all. Any orthodox publication of the present day, for instance, must, as orthodox, answer to it; nor would it be supposed from that coincidence to derive any title to independent authority. Not that this kind of evidence is the less forcible on that account, in any instance wherein its use is admissible. It, in fact, is one, and perhaps the principal one, of a class of scriptural proofs, which change their very nature, by being combined with others; and may be compared to those substances, which require a

chemical union with others of a different class, in order to elicit their most striking properties.

Although it does not enter into my plan to investigate the *proofs* made use of in the first settlement of the Canon ; that this kind of evidence must have been one of the chief, by which the judgment of the Church was determined, may be naturally concluded, both from the nature of the subject, and from the notices which are left us of such proofs being resorted to, by Eusebius and others.

Even in the days of the apostles and inspired teachers, such a rule we know was insisted on by St. Paul ; “ Though *we*, (writes he to the Galatians<sup>1</sup>,) or an angel from heaven, preach any other Gospel unto you, than that we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other Gospel unto you, than that you have received, let him be accursed.”

The antecedent claims, which would induce them to bring any writing to this test, would be the evidence of particular Churches, in which the writing had been deposited ; the autography of the MSS. in some cases furnishing particular signs, such as may be supposed to have been the case with the original copy of St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians<sup>1</sup>, and the traditional account of its contents, or of any circumstances connected with it. The seal

<sup>1</sup> Chap. i. 8, 9.      \* See chap. vi. 11.

and confirmation of its authenticity, would be its agreement with such scriptural doctrine as was contained in those books which were so widely circulated, and so clearly sanctioned, as to furnish the basis of a standard for Scripture. One work settled, became a measure for others, and Scripture was made the test of Scripture. The sacred volume thus formed, becomes the depository of a power hardly less effectual, than that which the inspired Church possessed of trying spirits; and is our unfailing security against the forgeries of distant ages, and the pretended revelations of later times.



## CHAP. IV.

HOW THE FIRST UNINSPIRED CHURCH FULFILLED ITS  
OFFICE OF **DISPENSING** THE TRUTHS CONTAINED  
IN THE SACRED RECORD.

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TO the apostles a revelation had been given, which on their removal was supplied by a sacred record. The apostles had been commissioned and empowered to preserve that revelation pure and perfect, by the extraordinary suggestions and corrections of the holy Spirit; and also to attest it by miracles and miraculous endowments. The Church, as has been shewn, was qualified to fulfil the same purposes with regard to the sacred record. But then, the apostles were not only commissioned and empowered to preserve their revelation entire and uncorrupted, and to furnish evidence to its divine character; they had a further duty to perform; that, namely, of *dispensing* the truths it contained—of “rightly dividing the word of truth<sup>a</sup>,” as it is expressed by one of them. For this portion of their ministry

<sup>a</sup> 2 Tim. ii. 15. *ὀρθοτομεύειν* means the fashioning of the word preached, so as to render it intelligible, acceptable, effectual; as the workman *cuts* the stone or wood, to suit the particular object about which he is employed.



likewise, they received from our Lord himself an assurance of extraordinary assistance ever at hand<sup>b</sup>; which the narrative of that ministry clearly shews to have been fulfilled. The sacred record required, of course, a corresponding dispenser; and the Church was accordingly so shaped and modelled, as to assume that character. In what manner it discharged this portion of its duty, on the first ceasing of divine interposition, is the point of inquiry at which we are now arrived. The measures adopted will be considered briefly and separately; and first, among these, may be noticed the perpetuation of a clerical order, as distinct from the laity, in every Church.

### *I. Ministers of different orders.*

In sacred history, we find the apostles, and others duly appointed, exclusively officiating in a course of ministerial duties; and, if it be admitted, that these, or many of these offices, were designed to be perpetual, the perpetual obligation on Christians to have a separate officiating order to succeed the first, seems to be a necessary inference. The character

<sup>b</sup> E. g. Luke xxi. 14, 15. "Settle it therefore in your hearts, not to meditate before what ye shall answer; for I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist." 2 Cor. xii. 9. "My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness;" and the like.

and pretensions of this order may, indeed, become changed, so far as to be inconsistent with Christianity itself; but this should only induce us to ascertain clearly, and to keep steadily in view, the true object and intent of the institution. Beyond this connection with the formal observances of religion, however, the ministers of the Gospel may be viewed in the light of special *dispensers of the truths contained in the New Testament*. This is their chief and most important office; and if it be true, that one of the purposes divinely intended in the formation of the Church was the dispensing of these truths; the appointment of this order, as one of the methods, becomes an obligation, independent even of apostolical precedent or specific rule<sup>c</sup>. The great caution to be observed in the Church, was, strictly to adhere to this view of its ministers. There was a continual temptation presented to the Jewish converts, in the habit of looking at religion, as it existed in the former Church of God; and equally so to the Gentile converts, in their long familiarity with the corruptions of the heathen world. In both, the minister of religion had been regarded as the mean of communication between the worshipper and the Being worshipped; between Man who sought divine instruction, and the Deity from whom it was

<sup>c</sup> Ignatius's assertion is strictly correct, "Without these it cannot be called a *Church*;" that is, the Christian society could no longer fulfil the object of its institution, whatever other means might be substituted. Ep. ad Trall. sec. 3.

supposed to proceed. But Christians were left without any such mediator on earth. Their High Priest was no longer visible ; and the sacred record was the only mode of sensible communication which had been left ; Christ was seen no more, and the Holy Ghost was no longer outwardly manifested. The Christian ministers, therefore, were designed to be the organ of the Church<sup>d</sup>, in dispensing these divine oracles ; not themselves the oracles and sources of information.

That the primitive bishops claimed for themselves no higher character, is very plain from the tenor of their lives, and from the language of their genuine remains. It is evident from the writings of Clement, Ignatius, and Polycarp, that the terms “ Priest,” (*ιερεὺς*),<sup>e</sup> “ Vicar of Christ,” “ Mediator,” “ Order

<sup>d</sup> Ignatius calls them in his Epistles to the Trallians, “ servants of the Church of God,” see sec. 2.

<sup>e</sup> It may be necessary to state to the mere English reader, that there are two Greek words, of very different import, which we translate indifferently “ priest.” *Ιερεὺς* is one, and is the term applied to him whose office it was to sacrifice, or otherwise to mediate between the worshipper and the being worshipped ; the other, *πρεσβύτερος*, signifies an Elder ; and was applied to those ministers in the Christian Church, whose age or office entitled them to such distinction. To Christ alone, under the Gospel dispensation, was the term *ιερεὺς* applicable, and to him alone it is applied in the New Testament ; but, from the common custom among the early Christian teachers, of illustrating the respect and observance due to the Gospel ministers, from that which had been paid to the Jewish priests, the term *ιερεὺς* gradually became transferred to the Gospel minister. The same occurred with respect to many

of the altar," (τάξις τοῦ βήματος,) were not yet the appropriate vocabulary of the Christian's language<sup>e</sup>. Although the order of bishops had succeeded the apostles in the government of the Church, yet they presumed not to assume the title. "They who are now called bishops," writes St. Ambrose<sup>f</sup>, "were originally called apostles; but the holy apostles being dead, they who were ordained after them to govern the Church, could not arrive at the excellency of the first; nor had they the testimony of miracles, but were in many other respects inferior to them. *Therefore they thought it not decent to assume to themselves the name of apostles; but,*

other Christian institutions. The Lord's table, *e. g.* acquired the title of "the altar;" the bread and wine, that of "the sacrifice." It is surprising, how much the accidents which befall language affect even the practical views of those who employ it. At this day, we may trace to these very ambiguities a proneness to apply to the several parts of the Christian institution, reasoning drawn from those parts of the Jewish which do not coincide with them, further than that both now bear the same name. The use made of this fallacy by the Church of Rome, in its gradual assumption of those powers and privileges for its bishop, which can only belong to a pontiff or high priest, are now too well known to require further notice. See particularly Encyclop. Metropolit. No. xv. Art. LOGIC, and Whately's Sermons, Sermon V.

<sup>e</sup> Bp. Beveridge, in answer to Mr. Daille's objections to the authenticity of the apostolical canon, has maintained the primitive use of these terms; but his testimonies really prove no more than that they were sometimes used, always perhaps, figuratively. His remarks on the use of ἐπισκόπος and πρεσβύτερος, are more correct. See Beveregii Codex Can. lib. ii. c. 10.

<sup>f</sup> Cited by Amalarius, de Offic. Ecc. lib. ii. c. 13. and by Bingham, Ecc. Ant. b. ii. c. 11.

dividing the names, they left to presbyters the name of the presbytery, and they themselves were called bishops."

The same modest pretensions are manifested in the titles of the other ministers. No other official distinction was preserved beyond that of presbyter and deacon. Prophets, Interpreters, Helps, and the long list of extraordinary agents, had found successors and substitutes in men qualified by ordinary means: but these presumed no more than the bishops, to retain the titles of the persons whose place they occupied only in part. This scruple about assuming titles of distinct rank, has inclined many to think, that what are afterwards found in the Church, under the general denomination of the five inferior orders of clergy, did not yet exist. These were the sub-deacons, acolythists, exorcists, readers, and door-keepers. It is certainly true, that these words do not occur in the genuine remains of the apostolical Fathers; and, in short, no term indicating a lower order than that of deacon. Nevertheless, as has been before pointed out, this term was very comprehensive, and originally included even apostles. Its specific application became gradually more and more narrowed, as the distinct kinds of ministers or deacons received appropriate names. At the period to which we are now arrived, this general appellation may still have been the only one, for some or all of these five offices, which were afterwards distinguished by



specific names. The diaconship of the New Testament evidently comprehended many offices not afterwards included under it. These very five offices and others, may possibly then have existed long before they were separately named. Among the deaconesses even, similar distinctions may have obtained, without any distinguishing title. We read, at least, of employments assigned to them, which it would be obviously inconvenient to unite generally in the same person ; for instance, the offices of door-keeper, and of attendant on the sick.

The principal need of these female ministers has been already pointed out : and, accordingly, as the character of the Christian preachers became better known, the suspicions and scruples of strangers were less likely to be awakened, by the visits of male catechists to all ages and sexes, for the purpose of instruction ; and the order of deaconesses would naturally be discontinued. This very soon began to be the case : although the remnant of such an order existed in the Latin Church until the tenth or eleventh century ; and in the Greek Church, a century later. In the age of the apostolic Fathers they are spoken of under the same title which St. Luke may be supposed to apply to them in the Acts<sup>g</sup>, that of widows<sup>h</sup>.

<sup>g</sup> Acts vi. 1.

<sup>h</sup> Ignat. Ep. ad Smyrn. c. 13. Ἀσπάζομαι τοὺς οἴκους τῶν ἀειλφῶν

Over all these different orders, the authority of the bishop was distinct and supreme. "Let nothing," writes Ignatius to the Church of Smyrna<sup>1</sup>, "relating to the Church, be done without the bishop;" and, again, to Polycarp, "Let nothing be done without your sanction<sup>k</sup>." The superintending authority in all spiritual matters seems to have extended even to the right of administering the Sacraments. For the same Father writes, to remind the Church of Smyrna, that "it is not lawful either to baptize, or celebrate the feast of love, without the bishop<sup>l</sup>." Nothing, indeed, seems more reasonable and natural, than that the discretionary exercise of the minister's office should be various in different ages. Education, and other circumstances, might render the clergy, universally, fit in one age, for that which only some were qualified to perform in another. We expect, accordingly, to find at different periods a different authority exercised by the bishop over the subordinate clergy. It was once deemed inexpedient in our own Church, to allow all the clergy to preach; and a similar prudence may have dictated a like caution, in the regulation

μου οὐκ ἡγνάριζι καὶ τέκνοις, καὶ τὰς παρθένους τὰς λεγομένας Χήρας.

See Cotelerius's note on the expression; see also Ep. ad Polyc. c. 4.

<sup>1</sup> Chap. viii.

<sup>k</sup> Chap. iv.

<sup>l</sup> Ep. ad Smyrn. c. 9.

of the duties of the primitive clergy ; which would gradually and of course, relax, as the cause ceased.

It is, however, the office of the Christian ministers, as dispensers of the truths of the New Testament-record, to which our attention is now directed ; and if it be inquired, in what way these several orders discharged this office, under the superintendence of their bishop, and what part the bishop himself took in this common duty ; we shall, perhaps, find no further difference between the method originally pursued, and that now established among the purest reformed Churches, than is accounted for, and warranted, by the difference of circumstances.

The public reading of portions of the Scriptures in the service of the Church ; and even of the prayers, as made up in a great measure of scriptural expressions, may of itself be reckoned among the ministerial duties of *dispensing* Gospel truth. Indeed, in an age when neither books nor readers were general, this would be even more important than at present ; because, whatever more convenient forms were devised for the conveying of those truths, it was necessary to convince all, that to the Bible they were to be traced ; and this could only be done, by reading or hearing it read. If, therefore, there be any difference in the proportion which the lessons have borne to the prayers in the primitive Church services, and in the service of any modern

society of Christians; it might be expected to have been generally greater formerly than now.

Such was the case. The remains of the apostolical Fathers do not, indeed, furnish direct testimony<sup>m</sup>, to the custom of reading the Scriptures, as part of the Church service; but the writings of those who immediately succeeded them, are sufficiently clear and ample on the point; and speak of it as a custom originally established, and coeval with the Church service. Justin Martyr, Chrysostom, and St. Basil, may be appealed to as decisive authorities for the early existence of the usage; which, indeed, could not have been neglected without so flagrant a violation of the fundamental principles of the Church's establishment, as to have occasioned the neglect, and the origin of it, to be recorded and handed down to us. The mere silence of history on such a point, would have left us warranted in maintaining the observance of the custom.

At the same time, the public reading of the Scriptural record was not the only, nor the principal office which the ministers of the Church had to perform, as dispensers of the truths contained in it. That record was the test, the source of all that was to be communicated to the world; but it

<sup>m</sup> For the indirect testimony to be derived from these writings, see the remarks on the public reading of the Scriptures, considered as one of the means of *preserving* the sacred record.

was left to the discretionary power of the Church, to shape the various forms in which it should be presented to mankind—to the Church collectively, to its ministers individually. The Gospel ministers were to expound, to arrange, and to accommodate the divine truths to the education, habits, and other circumstances of their hearers ; looking in each instance to the mode, in which instruction would be best understood, and most readily listened to. Hence, the importance of the preacher's character—not as the eloquent master of the feelings of an audience—but far more, as the judicious dispenser of Gospel truth ; in applying, and teaching others to apply to particular cases, the general principles and precepts of the New Testament ; in arranging systematically the doctrines, there incidentally taught ; or in giving clearness to what might be there obscure, by combining separate passages, and by all other legitimate methods of uninspired exposition. In such an employment, the danger, the chief danger at least, would arise from too great an accommodation to the previous tastes and habits of thought in those addressed. The converted Gentile philosopher would best understand the Christian mysteries, when illustrated by allusions to the metaphysical theories with which his fancy had been previously familiar ; the Jew would be made more ready to listen and to understand, by the continual use of images belonging



to the Old dispensation, to clothe and recommend the topics of the New. In the great inspired preacher to the Gentiles, his successors and imitators would observe, perhaps, the splendid effect produced by his grafting Christian instruction on the manners, and even the prejudices, of men ; and might, therefore, proceed the more fearlessly in the same track, without quite the same controlling wisdom. What he had gained by colouring his instructions with the memory of the law, and its venerable adjuncts, when addressing the Jew ; or by alluding to the serious pursuits, or the amusements of the Gentile world, when the Gentiles were addressed ; emboldened, perhaps, the first uninspired preachers even beyond the bounds of prudence. They taught, we have every reason to believe, truth and only truth ; but, if we may judge from the remains, even of the apostolical Fathers, it would be uncandid not to admit an over-readiness, to allow those truths (in some cases) to receive their form and impression from the previous notions, both of Jew and Gentile. It was the easier method, nor can we wonder to find it adopted. But to this only, can we attribute the ready introduction into the Church's language, of the terms above mentioned, " priest," (*ιερεὺς*), " mediator," &c., as applied to the ministers of that religion which acknowledges no priest on earth, and only " one Mediator between God and men,

the man Christ Jesus<sup>n</sup>." Harmless as it might have been then, it is, perhaps, the first link in that chain of corruption which ended in the creation of a Christian pontiff<sup>o</sup>. Their accommodation to the Gentile prejudices, or rather to the philosophy of the Gentiles, was by no means so great; although occasionally discoverable in some laboured illustrations of the doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation<sup>p</sup>.

It was to the sacred record, however, and to their own preaching, only as a particular form of com-

<sup>n</sup> 1 Tim. ii. 5.

<sup>o</sup> It was, doubtless, in conformity with the custom of the synagogue, that the sermon used in the primitive Church to be almost universally delivered by the preacher *sitting*, whilst the congregation *stood*. (See Bingham's Eccl. Antiq. book xiv. c. 4. sect. 24.) "The Scribes and Pharisees (said our Lord) *sit* in Moses' seat;" (Matt. xxiii. 2.) and his own example might have been considered as a further warrant for adopting the Jewish usage in a matter of indifference. He is described, even in childhood, as *sitting* and disputing among the doctors in the temple; (Luke ii. 46.) and again we read, chap. iv. 20. that after He had stood up to read the prophet Esaias, He *sat down* to teach the people. See also chap. v. 3. and John viii. 2. His avowal, as recorded in St. Matthew's Gospel, chap. xxvi. 55. is, "I *sat* daily with you teaching in the temple."

<sup>p</sup> Almost all the early heresies may be traced to the presumptuous attempt to speculate *metaphysically* on the nature of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. St. Paul speaks of such speculations as "falsely called knowledge;" and warns Timothy against them, as endangering the faith of the instructor and the instructed. For the results which ensued in no long interval, we need only refer to Irenæus's first book adv. Hæreses.

municating it, that they directed the attention of their audience ; and it deserves to be recorded, as a remarkable illustration of this fact, that in the African Church a custom long prevailed among the preachers, of quoting only part of any scriptural passage, cited in their sermons, and pausing for the remainder to be filled up by the congregation. An instance of it may be found in Augustin's Sermons <sup>q</sup>.

That the character<sup>r</sup> of the primitive *preaching* was such as is here described, we chiefly infer from the character of the primitive *writings*; and these being in the form of Epistles, require some observations distinct from what is applicable to them, in common with preaching.

The custom of writing public letters, is a distinct branch of the office of the Christian ministers, in dispensing the truths of the Gospel ; and one for which, no less than preaching, they had the example of the apostles. Indeed, when we consider the opportunity afforded by such a mode of address, for the bishop to give an interest to his instructions, by allusions to matters of local and peculiar interest,

<sup>q</sup> See Bingham's Eccl. Antiq. book xiv. ch. iv. sec. 26. where the passage is cited.

<sup>r</sup> That such was the character of their epistolary instruction, will be manifest from a cursory glance at the remains of the apostolical Fathers, which abound with references to scriptural authority.

which could not so properly be introduced in a Sermon or a Charge, it is rather surprising to find so early and so total a disuse of this good old custom. It is probable, that few attempts to exhort or to instruct as a preacher would be so interesting, as the opening of the successive packets, for instance, which conveyed to the Churches of Asia the farewell injunctions of Ignatius ; and Polycarp's serious instructions to the Philippians were, doubtless, remembered better in an Epistle, which disdained not an allusion to conversational matters, than if he had been compelled to address them only with the solemnity of the Christian preacher\*. Clement, whose First Epistle to the Corinthians is perhaps, on the whole, the most valuable of the remains of the apostolical Fathers, seems not to have been sensible of this advantage, in the method which he nevertheless employed ; and his Epistle is therefore a treatise, compared with an apostolical Epistle, cold, dryly systematic, and uninteresting. It is scarcely possible to devise a better method of appreciating St. Paul as a writer, in this particular department, (as a writer, namely, of public letters to bodies of Christians ;) than by comparing with Clement's his own energetic Epistles to the same Church written on nearly the same subject. At the same time, it must be considered, that Clement was writing in the name of the *Church*

\* See ch. xi. and xiii. of the Epistle.

at Rome, and addressing a Church not peculiarly his charge. Now, it is out of this latter circumstance that an *Epistle* derives its most interesting topics.

It was thus then that the primitive Church fulfilled its office of dispensing the truths of the sacred record, through the agency of its various orders of Ministers. They read publicly the word of God; they preached it; and they sent it to the absent by letters. Of the mode of appointing these Ministers, some account has been given in a preceding part of this inquiry; enough, perhaps, for our purpose. It does not appear, from the remains of the apostolic Fathers, whether the performance of this rite required a Bishop. Still, as this practice is mentioned by Jerome, Chrysostom, and succeeding writers; and noticed by them, not as an innovation, but as a settled usage: there can be no reasonable doubt of its primitive adoption.

The revenue for the support of the clergy in this season of the Church's poverty, appears to have arisen from the continual contributions of the laity in each Church; aided in some instances by the accumulation of a fund, the probable origin of which, in the apostolic days, has been already suggested.

The catalogue of the bishops ordained by the apostles is, according to the most probable account, as follows<sup>t</sup>:

<sup>t</sup> See Bingham's *Eccl. Antiq.* b. ii. c. i. sect. 4.



I. At Jerusalem: James the apostle, and Simeon the son of Cleopas.

Authorities: Unanimous testimony, especially that of Jerome, Epiphanius, Chrysostom, the author of *The Apostolical Constitutions*, Hegesippus, Clemens Alexandrinus, and Dionysius of Corinth, as quoted by Eusebius.

II. Antioch: Euodius and Ignatius.

Baronius conjectures, that they were contemporary; one for the Gentile, and the other for the Jewish portion of the Church. But, it must be admitted, that this is not a very likely arrangement; when we consider, that one of the great efforts of the apostolical founders was to amalgamate Jew and Gentile into one Church, and to preserve the *unity* of the Spirit. They are represented as successive bishops by Eusebius, Theodoret, Athanasius, Origen, and Jerome. At the same time, the expedient might have become necessary for a time at Antioch, as appears to have been the case at Rome.

III. Smyrna: Polycarp.

Authorities: Jerome, Irenæus, Tertullian, Eusebius.

IV. Ephesus: Timothy.

See APOSTOLIC AGE.

Authorities: Eusebius, Chrysostom, Epiphanius, Jerome, Hilary the deacon, the author of *The Passion of Timothy* in Photius, and Theodoret, who expresses himself singularly enough, saying, " that

he was bishop, under the title of an apostle<sup>u</sup>."

V. Crete: Titus.

The same authorities. Eusebius makes both metropolitans. Hooker adopts this view, in his *Eccles. Polity*.

VI. Athens: Dionysius the Areopagite, and Publius Quadratus.

Authorities: Dionysius bishop of Corinth, a writer of the second century, quoted by Eusebius. It was Quadratus who presented an *apology* to the emperor Hadrian.

VII. Philippi: Epaphroditus.

Authority: Theodoret.

VIII. Rome: Linus, Anacletus, and Clement.

The order of succession between these three is

<sup>u</sup> See too the quotation above given from St. Ambrose. It is likely enough, indeed, that Timothy was called an apostle, because *sent* by St. Paul to preside over the Church at Ephesus; and it was perhaps subsequently, to avoid the confusion between apostles of Christ and these apostles of his apostles, that the latter were called by a synonymous term angels, or messengers. Under this title St. John speaks of them in the Revelations. This title also must have been liable to objection, because applying so specifically to an unearthly messenger; and still more, when the succession of bishops in established sees began to take place, and a new bishop was not necessarily *sent* to preside over a new see, and ceased therefore to be considered in the light of a messenger, apostle, or angel. His *superintending* character was now the chief, or only one which claimed regard, and hence the natural transition to, and permanent adoption of, the title *Episcopus*; *Superintendent*.

not very easily determined. Irenæus, Tertullian, Chrysostom, Eusebius, Ruffinus, Jerome, Optatus, Epiphanius, and Augustin, all contain notices which may help the inquirer. The most probable mode of solving the difficulty is, that in the distracted state of the Church at Rome, the same necessity, which required the care both of St. Paul and St. Peter, namely, the aversion of the Jewish party to the great Gentile apostle, might have caused a division of that Church into two societies: over that, composed chiefly of Gentiles, Linus may have been appointed by St. Paul, and succeeded by Anacletus; over that, consisting of Jews chiefly, Clement may have been appointed by St. Peter. As Clement survived Linus and Anacletus, and by that time the spirit of dissension had well nigh ceased, the Church was probably reunited and again became one, as it originally was, when St. Paul first wrote and preached to them; and thus Clement became the first sole bishop. The assertion of Eusebius, that St. Paul and St. Peter were joint founders, favours this view; which is, however, subject to the objection above noticed, respecting a similar case at Antioch.

#### IX. Hierapolis: Papias.

He was a disciple of St. John, and contemporary with Ignatius and Polycarp\*. Although, therefore, there is no direct assertion in ancient authors, of

\* Irenæi, lib. v. c. 33.

his being ordained by the apostle, this is ranking him with the others.

*Propagation of the faith by missionaries.*

Bishops, priests, and deacons, then, were the regular and appointed agents of every Church, for dispensing the contents of the sacred record amongst its members ; each according to his office. It was one great purpose for which the Church was founded, to *dispense* the truths so intrusted to it : and the institution of these orders was one of the principal means employed for accomplishing this object. But this duty of the Church and of its ministers, would have been very imperfectly, and (if one may say so) unconstitutionally performed, if their labours had been limited to their respective societies, or to Christians only. One of the marks set on the new Church of God, to distinguish it from his former holy people, was, its universality. Directly opposed to the principle on which the Jewish polity was instituted—a principle, namely, of separation, guarded by a fence-work so intricate and elaborate, that it could never have afforded a free admission to the great mass of mankind—directly opposed to this, was the precept of the Gospel, “ Go forth into *all lands*, and preach the Gospel to *every creature*.” What was, perhaps, more effectual too than formal precept, was the genius and character of the institution. The separation of the divine worship from

any one Temple, or local point of association ; the substitution of *principles*, on which sacred societies may be formed to any extent and number, instead of the establishment of any one society ; the removal of all necessary ordinances connected with the customs of any one people, or the peculiarities of any one climate, or country ; all qualified the new dispensation for a universal one. On those, then, who were intrusted with the New Testament, the duty of promoting this object by all legitimate means, was impressed, as well by the character of that holy deposit, as by the special precepts it conveyed to them. Even complete success was promised at some indefinite period, to animate the efforts of every age ; which, without the assurance of prophecy, might still seem, in the ordinary course of Providence, never likely to be fully successful.

It is in the character of propagators of the new faith, that the inspired teachers of the Word are chiefly presented to our view in holy writ ; as it was, indeed, their chief characteristic. But the duty of sustaining the same character, (as did all ministerial duties,) devolved on their uninspired successors. The ministers of the primitive Church were not only employed in teaching at home ; but were sent abroad to plant the faith, and to give freely that gift which they had freely received.

Concerning the personal labours of these early missionaries there is much fable, and no means



of separating from it whatever may be true. On the whole, it is, no doubt, better for us, that we should only know their history by its results; lest, in our admiration for the saints and martyrs of Christ, we should forget to give the glory to God. In no case is this temptation more strongly felt, than in contemplating the adventurous course of a missionary. Even although he may perform no "signs" and "wonders," he seems to disturb the established course of the world. Ancient prejudices, national habits and institutions, fall before him; the very passions of men seem to be cast out by his word; and his work itself looks, in every age, the result of miracle.

Much, too, of what is recorded concerning the planting of the primitive Churches, has been vitiated through the ambition of every Church, at some period, to refer its origin to an apostle; or, at least, to one especially appointed for its establishment by an apostle. Hence, doubtless, many of the worthy successors of God's inspired servants have been robbed of that grateful tribute, which posterity would still gladly pay to their zeal and fidelity, in the cause of the Gospel; and a general statement only remains to be given, of what may be considered as the undistinguishable labours of the inspired and uninspired in the primitive Church; undistinguishable, I mean, beyond what clue is afforded by Scripture.

A similar rivalry among the different parts of

every Christian country, of Europe especially, to be foremost, or among the first, who were elected and called, renders it no less difficult to ascertain the precise places wherein the Word was planted; even in countries concerning which the most certain testimony is preserved, that they *were* visited and partially enlightened.

Greece, Italy, Spain, France, Germany, Great Britain, and many other parts of Europe, have each some authority to trace their first conversion to apostles, or their immediate successors. The labours of St. Paul and St. Peter at Rome, give much reason for supposing, that throughout Italy Christianity soon found converts; and, that the settlement of a Church in Spain was contemplated at least by St. Paul, long before his death, his own words bear testimony<sup>1</sup>. Macedonia and Greece, and the reception which the Gospel had met with there, under St. Paul's ministry, need not be mentioned. In Asia, too, we trace its progress on inspired authority from Judea to Syria, and from Syria through Asia Minor. How far the labours of Paul, Barnabas, and their attendants, were followed up by those who, inspired or uninspired, strove to tread in their steps, we may judge from the accounts of Irenæus<sup>2</sup> and Tertullian<sup>3</sup>, both, writers

<sup>1</sup> See Romans xv. 24, 28.

<sup>2</sup> Irenæi adversus Hæres. lib. iv. c. 67.

<sup>3</sup> Tertullian, adv. Judæos, c. 7.

of the second century, and both asserting that Christ was by that time worshipped throughout the East. Even to India, indeed, his name and worship must have already penetrated, if Eusebius be correct in stating, that Pantenus found there a copy of St. Matthew's Gospel, which was reported to have been left by St. Bartholomew<sup>b</sup>. If we turn our eye to the condition of Africa in those times, it would be hardly too much to assert, that it must even at that period have numbered amongst its believers, whether colonists or aboriginals, more than it can boast after the long interval of 1800 years<sup>c</sup>. Alexandria in Egypt was sure to imbibe, and to communicate every new system which appeared

<sup>b</sup> Eusebii Hist. Ecc. lib. v. c. 10. Mosheim supposes, that Eusebius meant this not of the Indians, but of certain Jews, who were inhabitants of Arabia Felix, (see Ecc. Hist. vol. i. p. 149.) This certainly is not implied. Eusebius only states, that the book was written in Hebrew; and it might possibly, therefore, have been a copy, not originally designed for the Indians, but left with them by their apostolic missionary, because he had none in their own language. Or, it is very conceivable, that it might have been even an Indian translation made by Bartholomew for their use, and written by him in *Hebrew characters*, (which they would easily learn,) because more familiar and more readily used by him. The Greek is Ἑβραίων, γράμμασι τὴν τοῦ Ματθαίου καταλιῦσαι γραφήν.

<sup>c</sup> By the end of the second century the proportion of Christians in Carthage was so great, that Tertullian speaks of them as constituting one tenth of the whole number of inhabitants. *Quid ipsa Carthago passura est? decimanda a te. Ad Scapulam.*

in the world ; and the constant intercourse which it maintained with Jerusalem, and also with Cyprus, the native island of Barnabas, will readily account for the early and strong interest felt there in the new religion ; and could not but produce zealous efforts to propagate its doctrines throughout Egypt, and the more enlightened parts of Africa. And, perhaps, monuments of their labours might at this day have remained, under God's blessing, by which, compared with our own, we might have estimated the effect of time and different circumstances on Churches so differently situated ; while those who now sit in darkness, might have been themselves the agents of enlightening others ; had the Gospel been preached in apostolic purity. But Christianity suffered a corruption in Egypt, more cruel than did the Israelitish faith of old. It went forth from Alexandria adulterated with vain philosophy of every kind ; and the worship of the one true God was again converted into a polytheism, the more dangerous, because no longer gross, sensible, and palpable in its absurdity, but subtile, spiritual, philosophical<sup>d</sup>.

It would be vain to inquire into the various steps, by which Christianity maintained its struggle with the powers of this world, and either gained or lost ground in these several countries ; much more to

<sup>d</sup> Consult Cave's *Life of Justin Martyr*, whose remains, as well as those of Origen, abound in Platonism.

attempt its history in each separate church or city ; but there are some Churches, the fate of which has been so much more closely connected than the rest, with all Christian societies in all ages, that any notices which may be gleaned of their primitive condition, may not be unacceptable. Jerusalem is, of course, one of these.

*The Church at Jerusalem.*

The history of the Church at Jerusalem, until the death of its first bishop St. James, is no further known, than from the scriptural record. On the martyrdom of that apostle, Symeon, the son of Cleopas, and, as has been asserted, one of the seventy disciples of our Lord, was appointed in his room. The importance of the see may be conjectured, from the anxiety of the whole Christian world about the succession. Apostles, and other eminent men, among their coadjutors, were present at the election, and aiding by their advice<sup>e</sup>. In this, as in several actions of the Christian world at this period, it is impossible not to recognize the operation of the most unqualified faith in the fulfilment of the Christian prophecies<sup>f</sup>. The period

<sup>e</sup> Euseb. Hist. lib. iii. c. 11.

<sup>f</sup> A similar instance, is the collection made for the poor Christians of Jerusalem, as a provision against a predicted famine. See Acts xi. 27—30.



was at hand, when our Lord's mournful prediction, respecting the fate of Jerusalem and its blinded people, was known to be approaching to its accomplishment<sup>a</sup>. In this, the risk and distress, to which even his followers might be exposed, were expressed in no equivocal terms. On the appearance of the fatal ensign of desolation, their flight was to be instantaneous, whatever sacrifice it might require. The dissolution of the nearest connections which existed between the believer and the friends or kindred who yet held back or wavered, was to be awfully abrupt. Even the positive woe, announced to those who should be "with child, or give suck, in those days," can scarcely be applied to the Jews alone; but accords with the closing assertion, that unless those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved; and that they were shortened for the elect's sake<sup>b</sup>.

The solemn suspense, with which the whole Christian world must have looked on, from one prophetic sign to another, for the consummation of this scene of sorrows, must have been more intense than that which is said to seize on the minds of men, when the first shock of an earthquake awakens an anticipation of the second and the third. In the mortal and visible agents which were at work,

<sup>a</sup> Besides the prophetic signs given, it was expressly declared, "This generation shall not pass away, until all these things be fulfilled." Matt. xxiv. 34. Mark xiii. 30. Luke xxi. 32.

<sup>b</sup> Matt. xxiv. 22. Mark xiii. 20.

producing the catastrophe, *they* saw the slow-appearing sign of the Son of man in heaven. But the faith that made them tremble, made them proportionably resolute to abide in Jerusalem, and to wait for the signal of their departure. Under the superintendence of the mild and conciliating St. James, the most prudent human measures were likely to cooperate with the promised aid of heaven. But in the midst of his exemplary course, they beheld him fall a martyr to the bigotry of the Jews, and the Church in Jerusalem obliged suddenly to appoint another bishop. The general interest, therefore, which was taken in Symeon's election, is easily explained; but only on the supposition, that our Lord's prophecies were as certain of fulfilment to the Christians, as if the events predicted had already taken place.

Between the appointment of Symeon, and the war which ended in the destruction of the holy city, the affairs of the Church were probably conducted with a prudence which did not disappoint the Christians; for in the interval, we hear of no further attempts against the peace of the believers, nor of any internal dissensions.

It was during the reign of Nero, that the Jews arrived at the last extremity of hope deferred. The seventy weeks of Daniel had been long fulfilled<sup>i</sup>; and while they obstinately rejected the claims of

<sup>i</sup> Daniel ix. 24.

a spiritual Messiah, they as obstinately clung to the hope of a temporal deliverer. Up to the time now mentioned, they patiently and sullenly endured all oppression, in the daily expectation, that their avenger would appear descending from the clouds of heaven. So violent, however, had their sense of wrongs become, and so rancorous their suppressed hatred to the Romans, that on the first signal of revolt the whole of Judea was in a state of determined rebellion.

As the accomplishment of our Saviour's prediction drew nearer, the signs of the end of the Jewish polity had been discerned, and have been recorded even by unbelievers. But the trial of the believer's faith, was to wait for the last sign, which, humanly speaking, was to put it out of his power to escape<sup>k</sup>. Not until the Roman standard, "the abomination of desolation," was brought to the siege of Jerusalem, and the holy city was "encompassed by armies," did the Church quit it. Before the formidable character of the rebellion was known, Cestius Gallus, the governor of Syria, marched with the united forces of his province against the capital, not doubting that the revolt would thus be at once suppressed; and being forced to raise the siege, and retire, a respite was given, whereby the Christians were providentially and signally left an opportunity for escape. Their

<sup>k</sup> Matt. xxiv. 15. Mark xiii. 14. Luke xxi. 20.

city of refuge was Pella, which, being occupied by Gentiles, escaped the fury of the conquerors; and here, during all the horrors of the war, and the subsequent miseries which resulted from it, they remained in perfect security. Not a hair of their heads perished<sup>1</sup>.

In the third year of the war, (A. D. 70,) Vespasian, who had been appointed by Nero to conduct it, left his station for Egypt, in order to secure support in his attempt to wrest the imperial dignity from Vitellius. He had already advanced into Galilee, burnt Gadara, and razed Jotapata, (where Josephus, the historian, was taken prisoner,) and was preparing to march against Jerusalem, when the prospect of obtaining the empire induced him to leave to his son Titus the completion of his plans. Under his command, the Roman army invested the holy city; and after a siege of five months, marked by scenes of horror which would be incredible did we not connect them with the peculiar temper of the Jewish nation, Jerusalem was taken, sacked, and levelled with the earth. Only enough was left standing, to form quarters for a garrison, or to be a monument of the greatness of the city subdued. Its temple, which was then left without one stone upon another, has never yet been rebuilt; Julian tried to restore it, and failed. Will the Jews,—will any

<sup>1</sup> Luke xxi. 18.

future Antichrist, be ever bold enough to renew the experiment?

As soon as the terrors of war were past, the Christian Church of Jerusalem returned to the desolate city; and took up its abode amidst its ruins. Here it existed until the final and utter destruction by Hadrian, who in the early part of his reign had rebuilt it, and called it *Ælia*.

Long before this latter event, the good Symeon had suffered martyrdom, having been permitted to preside over this first Christian Church, in its most trying season, for more than forty years; "God, probably lengthening out his life," to use the words of a pious and learned man<sup>m</sup>, "that, as a skilful and faithful pilot, he might steer and conduct the affairs of the Church in those dismal and stormy days." Eusebius states, that he was put to death on information laid against him, that he was of the family of David. This, if true, strongly marks the impression made on the minds of the Romans, that the Jews were so convinced of the truth of the Messiah's time being come, as to make it unsafe, to leave even the mild and aged Symeon amongst them, lest they should take him by force, and make him a king.

<sup>m</sup> Cave, in his life of St. Symeon.



*The Church at Rome.*

It requires some effort of imagination, to represent to ourselves, truly and fully, the feeling with which the imperial city was regarded throughout the world, in the first ages of Christianity. It was not only the greatest, the leading city of the universe ; for in this point of view, the influence of every association which flowed from it, might find a counterpart in the awe and admiration excited by turns for the capital of the Spanish, the French, or the British empires : but its character was distinct and supreme ;—it stood alone, the one abode of authority and rule, to which all other places had contracted a relation of dependence and subjection. That any society established there should, from the ordinary results of association, acquire a more august and dignified character, than similar societies elsewhere established, seems almost unavoidable. As it gradually numbered amongst its members more and more of those who formed prominent features in this great object of worldly veneration, the principle of association would of course operate more strongly still. But when the Emperor himself, not only became enrolled among its members, but promoted the success of these societies, by the actual protection and patronage of the imperial government, any distinction of respect, unanimously conceded to that society, through which, in the first instance, all these privileges

and favours flowed, and with which more immediately they seemed to be connected;—any distinction of respect paid to this society is conceivable, which may be compatible with the principles on which all the kindred bodies were formed; and a tendency, a very strong tendency, might be presumed to exist in all, even to go beyond this limit. This temptation would be twofold: in the several societies, to honour extravagantly, and give undue precedence, to that one which had allied itself to a source of prosperity, of which all partook; in the society elevated, to be puffed up by every successive token of respect, and to aim at a still higher elevation; and, as the origin and history of its original equality became less familiar, and less clearly to be ascertained, to claim, as legalized rights, those titles and that precedence which accident and custom had created. Such was the condition of the Church at Rome, in its progress from that primitive age, when it dwelt in equality and unity with its brethren, to the period at which it began to search, in Scripture and in legend, for the title-deeds to that supremacy, which courtesy and custom had unthinkingly established. On the transfer of the seat of empire from Rome to Constantinople, it was first awakened to the uncertain tenure of those rights, which it had so long enjoyed, not indeed without question, but with security. It had set an example of temporal ambition, which could not but prove attractive

to those who ministered to that ambition; and the Church of Constantinople, accordingly, claimed for itself a share of that rank, which, if rightly paid to its sister at Rome, while Rome was the imperial city, clearly now was due to that Church which occupied the corresponding station. Constantinople, as her Church represented, was "the new Rome," the young heir of Italian Rome's greatness; and, as such, she desired a participation at least of her rank and influence. Hence the diligence which even from the first the Church of Rome has displayed, in casting a shade over the origin of its greatness, and endeavouring to account for it on Scriptural authority, however palpably insufficient. This has been, ever since, its method of defence; and its purpose is partly answered, whenever the attention is thus decoyed from the real quarter, in which all its worldly grandeur was nestled and hatched.

It was with pleasure, therefore, that we look back on a period, when even at Rome the Church of Christ was only spiritual, her highest character, that of trustee of the record of revelation, and the first ambition of her bishops, to be dispensers of revealed truth, ministers of the word, or martyrs for its sake.

It is not the least striking evidence of the correctness of this view of the Church of Rome, that peculiar as its situation was, in the seat of empire, its authentic records are as barren as those of the

more remote and obscure Churches. Even the exact order of succession among the first three bishops, has furnished matter for elaborate controversy ; a fact, which would of itself be subversive of the claim to any peculiar rights, founded on a regular succession of bishops from St. Peter. Such a lineal descent would surely have had a record, as accurately preserved by the care of Providence, for the satisfaction of the Christian Church, as was the lineage of David, for that of God's former people. In the early bishops, as successors of St. Peter too, we should expect a record of authority exercised, to illustrate the right vested in them.

The probability that St. Peter and St. Paul were joint founders of this important Church, the former taking the apostleship to the Jews, the latter, that to the Gentile portion, has been already noticed. It has been further conjectured by some, that this division continued long after the decease of the two apostles ; and that thus we are to account for the otherwise contradictory statements, on the one hand, that Clement was the third in the list of bishops, on the other, that he was ordained by St. Peter, to take charge of the Church, when his own martyrdom was at hand. This is, indeed, to suppose the existence of two Churches originally at Rome ; the one governed by Linus, whom St. Paul appointed, and by his successor Anacletus, or Cletus ; the other by Clement, who survived, and

united both under one bishop. Undoubtedly, the ground for having two Churches would be one which only extreme necessity would have admitted, as the object in the establishment of any Church was union of Jew and Gentile in the common bond of Christianity. But, as it is little less than certain, that during the ministry of the two apostles, such unity was not effected, the two parties may possibly have thus continued distinct, until an opportunity was afforded for their union. This appears to have occurred during Clement's bishopric; and it not a little coincides with this view, that the only genuine work of his which remains, is wholly occupied with the subject of unity and Christian love, as the highest characteristic of a Church. If this view, which is sanctioned by the learned Cave, and is, perhaps, the only one that reconciles the statements of history, be admitted, the list of early bishops will stand thus <sup>a</sup>:

For the Gentile portion: Linus, and Cletus, or Anacletus:

<sup>a</sup> More than one instance will be found, subsequently recorded in ecclesiastical history, of schisms being ended by the temporary appointment of two bishops. See in Theodoret (lib. v. c. 3.) the proposal of Melitus, bishop of Antioch, to Paulinus, to settle the opposition between them in this manner. The same offer was made by the Catholic bishops of Africa to the Donatists, in the conference between them at Carthage; and from the way in which it was proposed, it would seem to have been, at that time, no unusual expedient. "*Nec novum aliquid fiet, &c.*" Collat. Carthag. Cognito i. sect. 16. Labbæi Concil. tom. ii. p. 1352.



for the Jewish portion: Clement:

for the whole reunited: Clement.

The Epistle to which I allude, must have been written after this union took place; for, although it is called an Epistle of Clement, yet it is really an Epistle from the Church at Rome to the Church of Corinth; and the strict intimacy which subsisted between these two Churches, and which amply accounts for such an Epistle having been written, was probably through the Gentiles, rather than through the Jewish converts. For it is to be remembered, that their link of union was St. Paul, who at Corinth first met with Aquila and Priscilla. To his residence at Corinth, they doubtless traced the first interest which he took in their conversion; and it is more than probable, that that interest would be shared by the Corinthians themselves, and be the foundation of a lasting intimacy. That such an intimacy did subsist between these two Churches, may be proved from an Epistle, written by Dionysius bishop of Corinth to the Church of Rome, towards the end of the second century; part of which is preserved by Eusebius; (lib. iv. c. 23.) and may further account for what is there noticed, that the above-mentioned Epistle of Clement used to be read at Corinth as a portion of the Church service. This Epistle, then, is an interesting monument of the peculiar connection between the two Churches. It is not the decree of a superior to an inferior body of Christians, but the

affectionate remonstrance of friends and fellow-christians on the renewal of those schisms at Corinth, which had before called for the interference of St. Paul. The Church of Rome reminds them (c. 47.) of their common apostle's authority and advice, as still preserved in those Epistles; and, as if careful not to offend by appearing to assume any authority by this act of friendly interference, accompanies all its advice with expressions like these; "Beloved, in this Epistle we are not only suggesting advice to you, but refreshing our own minds with our duty; for our station is the same, and the same our course of duty." "Beloved, the custom we adopt of reproving one another is excellent, and beyond measure useful; for it unites us to the will of God;" and it concludes with nothing stronger than an anxious wish that the messengers may bring back an account of that harmony which they so desired and prayed for. Is it likely that the Church of Rome or its bishop, would have neglected to mingle salutary threats of punishment and hints of a superintending authority with its exhortations, as St. Paul did in his Epistles, if either Church or bishop had then possessed apostolical control or superintendence over other Churches? Indeed, if such an authority had been vested in the Church of Rome, it is impossible that no more should be left on record of its intercourse with the other primitive Churches, in a season which, above all others, seemed to require the

active superintendence of a Head, if any there were.

Subsequently to the writing of this Epistle, all, perhaps, that deserves notice concerning the state of affairs at Rome, is the Epistle which Ignatius addressed to them, in his journey thither as a condemned martyr. This Epistle no less than the former, although in a different way, confirms the protestant's assertion, that all Churches are independent of Rome and the Romish bishop. Ignatius writes to them in the same independent tone which appears in his Epistles to other Churches ; and, in one place particularly, speaks of the joint founders of that Church, in a way which is certainly inconsistent with the view of their successors being invested with a similar character. He had been desiring their prayers for him in his approaching trial ; and he adds, " I do not *command* you as if I were Peter or Paul ; they were apostles." Would he, who of all writers, ancient or modern, most insists on the authority of the Christian ministry, in all its gradations, have neglected here to remind the Romans of the character of their bishop, if it were different from his own ? Could he have failed to allude to the infallible authority that still abode with them, if there were any, since that of Peter and Paul ?

The author of this Epistle soon after suffered martyrdom in the Coliseum at Rome ; and the chief object of sending the Epistle before him, appears to have been to prevent any rash attempt on the

part of the Christians there to rescue him. Any turbulent or disobedient spirit, which might have been thus displayed in the capital of the empire, would of course have been tenfold more dangerous to the furtherance of the Gospel, in awakening the suspicions of the Gentile government, than any thing which might take place elsewhere. The Epistle was admirably adapted to accomplish this, and the warm expressions which it contains, concerning the joys of martyrdom, will not seem unnatural and extravagant, if regarded with this view. A cold appeal to the prudence of his brethren at Rome would, with the strong excitement of feeling which his case produced amongst them, have been scarcely listened to. To desert the holy man from prudential motives, might have seemed to them mean and dastardly! It was requisite to represent the fate that threatened him, as not only good and glorious, but absolutely pleasurable. This is the spirit of all Ignatius's Epistles, but most of all, of that in which it was most needed.

His remonstrance was, perhaps, not misplaced; for the fact, that his remains were gathered up, as if from a melancholy effort to find some safe way of testifying their regard, seems to indicate, that unless precaution had been used, some imprudent attempt to rescue him might have been made.

*The Church at Alexandria.*

To these notices of the primitive Churches of Jerusalem and Rome, it would be desirable to add some account of the Church of Alexandria; as its influence on the character of the Christian world was certainly not less than that of either of the preceding. But it would be impossible to introduce such a history of it, as would be at once useful, and compatible with the scheme of this inquiry. At the same time, it may not be improper to remind the reader, of the several allusions which have been already made to the corrupt tendency of this Church from the earliest times; and to state briefly, that out “of the false knowledge” cultivated here, proceeded directly, or indirectly, nearly all the heresies of the first ages<sup>o</sup>. To this day,

<sup>o</sup> Melancthon’s assertion, that all the early Fathers were more or less infected with Platonism, is not without some foundation. “Statim post Ecclesiæ auspicia, per Platoniceam Philosophiam Christiana doctrina labefactata est. Ita factum est, ut, præter canonicas Scripturas, nullæ sint in Ecclesia sinceræ literæ. Redolet philosophiam quicquid omnino commentariorum extat.” *De Libero arbitrio*, inter *Locos Communes*. Mosheim arrives nearly at the same conclusion in his *Dissertatio de turbata per recentiores Platonicos Ecclesia*. An exposure of Origen’s Platonism may be found in Paganinus Gaudentius, *De Comparatione dogmatum Origenis cum philosophia Platonis*. Mr. Daillè, in his severe censure of the Fathers, has avowedly spared Origen, from a feeling, it would seem, that those who have exposed his errors, were themselves infected with the like; “neque dissimulandum est, eos qui adversus Origenem scripserunt, non fuisse in



indeed, remains may be traced in the Christian world, of the false and fatal notions which took their rise in Alexandria; and Christians and divines have not yet ceased to find Christianity in Plato, and to regard his metaphysical speculations on the nature of the Deity, as glimpses of revelation; or at least, as anticipations of divine truths, which they know not how to attribute to mere human ingenuity. And it must be confessed, that some of the metaphysical views, which, from time to time, have been taken of the doctrine of the Trinity, display a coincidence with Plato's system, too minutely exact to have been accidental. To one who adopts them, the conclusion must be unavoidable, that either Plato's knowledge was derived from inspiration, or that Christianity was derived from Plato. But we "have not so learned Christ."

*Schools, Catechists, and Catechisms.*

We are contemplating the primitive Church in the performance of its office of dispensing the revelation recorded and intrusted to its keeping; and we have seen it, with this object in view, interweaving the holy Scriptures into the stated service of God; maintaining a separate order of men for officiating, and for interpreting, as well as

his disputationibus tanta felicitate versatos, ut, dum hujus errores oppugnant, in nullos ipsi occurrerint." De vero usu Patrum, p. 265.

for reading this record ; and also employing them in offering the truths it contains to strangers and the heathen, as well as to the brethren.

But the Church's trusteeship was, to a certain extent, discretionary. Its first duty was thus to afford to all, access to the word of God, as God gave it ; their next, to resort to every method of communicating that word, which should render it in each case most intelligible or acceptable. The unconverted would require to be addressed in a different form from the Christian already instructed ; and, among both converted and unconverted, there would exist an endless variety of intellectual habits and capacities, which would require the truths of the Gospel to be shaped accordingly.

The great body of those then, to whom Gospel truths were addressed, are commonly divided into two classes ; the catechumens, or those who were preparing by an appointed course of instruction (κατήχησις) for baptism ; and the *fideles*, (πιστοί,) or complete Christians (τέλειοι.)

With respect to the latter, the Gospel truths were dispensed, not only as they were found in Scripture, but systematically arranged in Sermons, in Creeds, and in other formulas of religious instruction. For the purpose of conveying scriptural truth by these channels, either more compendiously, or more in accordance with the previous knowledge or general pursuits of those addressed, technical terms were introduced ; which, although not oc-

curing in Scripture, might represent certain doctrines contained there. The word *Trinity* may serve to illustrate what is here meant.

With respect to the instruction of the catechumens, it does not appear that any distinct order of ministers officiated as catechists; but that it was only a particular employment which might devolve on any minister; and which we find, at different times, attached to all the orders of the ministry, from the bishop to the lowest deacon. It was to avoid scandal and suspicion, no doubt, that the female catechumens were generally taught by that ancient order, the deaconesses, or widows; of which mention has been formerly made, and of whose original appointment this was probably the main reason <sup>P</sup>.

It was their office to prepare the candidates for baptism, by a course of instruction suited to each; but in what their catechism generally consisted, we know no further than that the sum of it was repentance and faith. In what it would naturally consist, as contrasted with the after instruction of the mature Christian, is a question on which it is not difficult to decide. The original and primary character of the Gospel scheme is *historical*; and

<sup>P</sup> See Bingham's *Ecel. Antiq.* book ii. ch. xxii. sec. 9. Agreeably to this view, the African Churches, in the decree of the Council of Carthage, specify among the qualifications of a deaconness, *Ut possit apto et sano sermone docere imperitas et rusticas mulieres, &c.*

the first office of its original preachers, accordingly, that of witnesses to facts. An historical account of the events of the sacred record would therefore seem, almost certainly, to be the appropriate instruction of the catechumen, if we had no clue to guide us beyond the character of the subject to be handled. But this presumption is greatly increased, by comparing it with what actually did take place during the apostolic ministry, in the few instances on record of what approaches nearest to catechetical instruction—the preaching of the apostles and others to an unconverted audience. In St. Paul's address to the Jews at Jerusalem, and to the Gentiles at Athens, his teaching is strictly of this character; and that this did not arise from any peculiar habit of composition, is evident from his Epistles, in which quite a different method is pursued. The point has been thought thus much worthy of notice, because it is not unreasonable to believe, that if the custom of so teaching Christianity to the young and the unlearned, were more common, the abstract truths would be more easily and naturally understood, afterwards. Whereas, to begin with these, gives the whole an abstruse and unattractive air to most; and creates a difficulty, in that study which was intended for the humblest capacities.

Separate establishments existed for the children of Christians and for the adult catechumens, as might naturally be expected; and the early use of

sponsors marks the anxious care of the Church, that provision should be made for preventing in all cases a mere conformity to custom.

With regard to the places in which the catechumens received their education and training, although these seem to have been in some instances separate and appropriate, yet in others, the church, or some part of it, was appointed for this purpose <sup>9</sup>.

It is scarcely possible to pursue, even in imagination, the stages which connect all these simple seminaries of elementary religion with those splendid and elaborate institutions, in which religion and useful learning are now united; and which are among the most powerful instruments employed, by our own Church especially, for dispensing the faith which she has in keeping.

<sup>9</sup> Bingham, book iii. ch. x. sec. 4.



## CHAP. V.

HOW THE FIRST UNINSPIRED CHURCH FULFILLED ITS  
OFFICE OF CONVEYING **DIVINE GRACE.**

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OF the sacred character of the Christian society, considered as the Temple of the Holy Ghost, and the appointed medium of its operations, it is scarcely possible to speak in language too strong. No peculiarity of the New Testament is more striking, than the continual and anxious endeavour of the sacred writers to awaken and cherish a sense of it. As portions of this holy building, as members of this society beloved of God, the Christians received from their Lord his one new commandment, "to love one another<sup>r</sup>." All the zeal of the great Apostle of the Gentiles to teach and preach and enlarge this society, was at the same time directed towards obtaining from every Church an acknowledgment and testimony of this, in the specific pledge of alms for the needy brethren of Judea. St. John's favourite theme is this holy love; and if more of the inspired preachers had left their teaching on record, this, doubtless, would have been a characteristic prominent in all their writings.

<sup>r</sup> John xiii. 34. xv. 12, 17.

It was a high and holy office which the Church had to execute in preserving inviolate the recorded revelation: it was a duty no less honourable and anxious, which it was appointed to discharge, in dispensing this intrusted blessing, so that mankind should receive the greatest possible benefit from it. But higher and holier, perhaps, was this its priestly office—its sacramental character—its duty of perpetually communicating to new countries and successive generations, the gift which it immediately received from Christ, and of which it was the appointed medium for ever. The acts which constituted these means were, of course, to be the essential badges of the society; and without them that society might have preserved the Bible, and distributed its contents, but would not have been a Christian Church. What these means are, all know. They are all those outward observances in which Christians meet to celebrate their whole spiritual communion with Christ and with each other; but especially those which are distinguished by specific divine institution—the sacraments, of Baptism, and the Lord's Supper.

Not that to them alone belongs a sacramental character; for it is evident, that if only these observances were perpetuated, the grace of God, which is promised to prayer, for instance, would want the external sign, and would not therefore be enjoyed. Baptism and the Eucharist are specifically sacraments, because the *precise form in each is to a certain*

*extent prescribed*; and therefore the communication of grace is attached to one unalterable ceremonial. But if, according to our Saviour's promise, "Where two or three are gathered together, there He is in the midst," all the religious meetings of Christians are means of grace; the Church itself, in the celebration of its union as the temple of the Holy Ghost, is sacramental. No specific form, beyond the necessary parts of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, claim this character; but then, there is a grace generally necessary to salvation appointed to be conveyed through prayer and other observances, although the exact description of these observances be left to the discretion of the Church.

What is now to be considered, therefore, is the mode in which the primitive Church celebrated these rites and ceremonies.

*Christian rites.*

The rites and observances of the Church may be classed under a twofold division; the one part of which would contain those through which divine grace is conveyed to individuals, as such, or as filling individual offices. Of which kind are the ceremonies of Ordination, Confirmation, &c. The other portion, under which the Sacraments would fall, comprises those which relate to Christians in their

common Christian character. Besides the Sacraments, are the Public Prayers, the Marriage and Funeral ceremonies, and the like. Both classes have been stated to be modes of intercourse with Him who has promised to be in the midst of us, whenever two or three are assembled together as his people. So far the ceremonies of the Church are all of the same character, and, as means of promised grace, are so far sacramental. But, in a further view, an important distinction occurs. Baptism and the Lord's Supper are fixed institutions, and grace is attached to the observance of these specific means: in the others, the means are of the Church's appointment, and the grace bestowed, although requiring *some* means, is yet not specifically attached to any.

But another difference obtains, which, although not quite so obvious, is scarcely less important and characteristic. One common object is sought in all these acts of Christian celebration—communion with Christ, participation of his Spirit. But we are not styled in Scripture *individually*, but *collectively*, the temple of the Holy Ghost, the abode of the Spirit; and as members of that well compacted body we receive it. Now it has been already more than once pointed out, that Christians are not one society; but many societies founded on the same principles. Each of these societies celebrates within itself the rites and ceremonies which are to unite it with Christ, and to preserve his Spirit among all its members. Each

Church, accordingly, may lawfully observe distinct *forms of prayer*, and distinct modes of appointment. It may do so, at least, to a very great extent. And as each Christian society thus holds communion with God in its own way, so does each member partake of that communion, as a member of his particular society or Church. With respect to the *Sacraments*, however, the case is not exactly so. Our act of communion here is performed, not as members of any one particular Church, but as members of the great Christian body—as belonging to the elect, the sanctified, the redeemed. The duties imposed on us by our religious condition in this respect, may admit of illustration from the necessities imposed on us by our natural condition. It is necessary to the well-being, and to the very existence, of each separate people or association of men, that they should use some language; although the variety of languages may be infinite, which will effect the end desired. This is analogous to the means of grace, not specifically, but generally required, and cultivated by each Church in its own way. Again, it is necessary to the existence of every individual of the human race, that at certain intervals, he should recruit his body by sleep. Here is a necessity, to which he conforms, not after the fashion of any one nation, not as attached to any one society, but in obedience to an invariable and universal law. To this answers the Christian's duty of celebrating the *Sacraments*. They are



specifically appointed as means of grace, and therefore are means of grace for all : all other ceremonies are means of grace for the members of the particular society which adopts them.

Of course these remarks, as far as they relate to the Sacraments, apply only to such portion of those rites as is recorded to be of our Lord's appointment. In Baptism it is the use of water, and of the prescribed form of words, which denotes the transfer to the baptized of all privileges claimed by the people of God, whether as Father, as Son, or as Holy Ghost. In the Lord's Supper, it is the symbolical use of the bread and wine, which Christ ordained for our instruction, and the accompaniment of the words with which He taught us to accompany it. Beyond the adherence to these points then, our inquiry into the practice of the primitive Church need not be prolonged. And first with respect to Baptism.

*Baptism.*

Of the continual and invariable use of water in Baptism, by the immediate successors of the apostles, it may be proof enough to state, that the remains of the latter end of the second and third centuries are so unequivocal and full on the exclusive employment of the symbol, that no doubt can be entertained of the custom never having ceased. There is a passage in the *Shepherd* of

Hermas, however, which, to those especially who rank him among the apostolical Fathers, may be cited as contemporary evidence. In his *Similitudes* (xix. 16.) he expressly speaks of the “water of baptism,” and in his *Visions* he alludes to it under the image of the Church floating in a mystic water<sup>t</sup>. Whether immersion only was the mode of using this sacramental symbol, is a question which need not detain the inquirer, since he will doubtless, in conformity with certain principles already established, perceive at once, that to such a departure from apostolic custom as may be supposed to exist in sprinkling, rather than in immersing the candidate, the discretionary authority of any Church clearly extends.

Not so with respect to the form of words, so solemnly prescribed by Christ himself; in strict accordance with which are all the earliest notices of the baptismal service. Its literal adoption by the first uninspired Church is inferred on grounds similar to those on which we assert the invariable use of the symbol of water. It is mentioned by Tertullian and a succession of writers who lived within too short a distance of this period to make its intermission at all probable<sup>u</sup>; and there is a testimony perhaps still earlier, that of the author

<sup>t</sup> Vis. iii. c. 3. Quare ergo super aquas ædificatur turris, audi. Quoniam vita vestra per aquam salva facta est et fiet.

<sup>u</sup> Tertullian, de Baptismo, c. 13. Cyprian, Ep. 73. August. de Baptismo, l. vi. c. 25. *et alios*.

of Clement's *Recognitions*, who undoubtedly alludes to it, when he speaks of persons "baptized in the name of the threefold Mystery<sup>x</sup>;" and, again, of the ceremony being performed "by invoking the name of the blessed Trinity<sup>y</sup>." In the *Apostolical Canons* an express prohibition against departure from it is found; which serves to mark the early attempts of heretics and innovators to corrupt and change the words prescribed. Menander is, perhaps, the earliest who is directly charged with this attempt, which has been also urged against the Montanists, Sabelians, and other heretical sects.

Let it be clearly understood, that the object of this and of similar inquiries into the practice of the primitive Church, is not to support the correctness of *our* Church, or of *any* Church, the practices of which coincide with these: the object is strictly historical; the mere statement of facts, without always inquiring what specific use those facts may serve. It is enough that they are truths; and truths seldom remain long unemployed and unprofitable. As to the practices themselves, we should be equally bound to observe them, whether the primitive Church observed them or not, if they are enjoined by Scripture; equally authorized to retain them on our own Church's authority, if not inconsistent with Scripture principles. The primitive Church, in the present view of it, is submitted

<sup>x</sup> *Recognit. lib. vi c. 9.*      <sup>y</sup> *Lib. iii. c. 67.*

to a trial on Scriptural evidence, such as one generation of fallible beings is ever subject to from another, and such as every Christian generation is required to institute on its predecessors ; according to the command, “ prove all things ; hold fast that which is good<sup>z</sup>. ”

It is gratifying, doubtless, to contemplate the genuine spirit of Christianity preserved in these early times ; and it even adds a natural confidence to decisions founded on independent authority, to find those also the decisions of that generation which was nearest our inspired guides. Still, our inquiry may be free and fearless.

We have satisfactory evidence now, that in the mode of administering the sacrament of Baptism, the first uninspired Churches fulfilled their trust. Did they equally so in dispensing this necessary medium of God’s grace to those for whom it was designed, and by the hands of such as were intended to officiate ? We are quite sure from the Scripture, of an authority and duty in the Church, to limit Baptism to no age ; did the primitive societies of Christians act on this principle ? Of this there can be no doubt in any candid mind. It is true that infant baptism is not mentioned expressly by an earlier writer than Justin Martyr and Irenæus<sup>a</sup> ; for, although the authority of Clement and Hermas are alleged by some learned men,

<sup>z</sup> 1 Thess. v. 21.

<sup>a</sup> Lib. ii. c. 39.

(besides that the testimony of the latter may be disputed on other grounds,) in either, it only amounts to the avowal of opinions, which would seem to be inconsistent with the doctrine of the Anabaptists, and not to an express declaration. But Justin and Irenæus wrote too early<sup>b</sup> to leave it a question, whether during the period between them and the apostolic age, any different regulation existed in this respect. Certainly no allusion is made by him to the novelty of the practice which he records. The primitive Church, like ourselves, was bound to communicate the holy trust, and its first symbol, to every age and sex within reach; and this it doubtless did.

Did it also offer it, as we feel ourselves bound to do, to all degrees of persons, to all ranks and nations? No circumstance, except want of individual preparation, appears to have formed a bar to the admission of candidates into any of the primitive Christian societies; and, as far as that preparation depended on acquiring knowledge, every

<sup>b</sup> Justin Martyr is supposed to have written his second Apology, in which infant baptism is alluded to, A. D. 148. Irenæus was born about A. D. 97, and wrote his book against heresies A. D. 176 or 177. Dodwelli Dissertat. in Irenæum, 3, 4. Justin's testimony is the more important, because he speaks of persons so baptized, who at the time of his writing were at the advanced age of sixty and seventy, and thereby implies the existence of the custom in the apostolic age. πολλοὶ τινὲς καὶ πολλὰ ἐξηκοντούται καὶ ἑβδομηκοντούται οἱ ἐκ παιδῶν ἡμαρτητευθῆσαν, κ. τ. λ. Ap. 2. p. 64.



facility for making it was afforded, in the establishment of schools for adults, and in the employment of catechists. There were, doubtless, moral qualifications beyond this, which were insisted on; and for want of these, many were forbidden the Christian privilege. Whole classes of persons were thus excluded, on the ground that their lives and occupations were inconsistent with this preparation; and with such pictures as the heathen historians and satirists give of the imperial city, we can hardly refuse to justify these interdictions, when we find the list proscribed to consist of players, gladiators, &c.<sup>c</sup> At the same time, there is no certain evidence that even this rule was commenced so early as the age of the apostolical Fathers<sup>d</sup>.

<sup>c</sup> See Tacitus, and Juvenal, *passim*.

<sup>d</sup> The list of the interdicted may be found in the *Apostolical Constitutions*, (lib. viii. c. 32.) which, although confessedly written at a period very much later than that on which we are now engaged, may be considered as conveying an account of *established* customs; which, in the absence of contrary evidence, have some claim to be assigned to the earliest age. The notes in Cotelierius's edition of the apostolical Fathers deserve to be consulted.

As the authority of the *Apostolical Constitutions* will depend much on the date which we assign to their composition, it may be proper to add, that the earliest author who mentions the work is Eusebius in his *History*, lib. iii. c. 25. (unless, indeed, we suppose the *Apostolical Canons* to have been written before;) but, as Eusebius mentions them among spurious works in circulation, the fact seems to imply that they must

The remarks already made on the institution of a ministerial order, and the evidence that the primitive Church well understood its design, and maintained its appropriate character, render it unnecessary to enter specifically into the question of the persons charged with the performance of the baptismal rite. It was confined, doubtless, as it has been in after times, among all sober Christians, to the ordained ministry, (under the authority of the bishop\*,) although cases may have occurred in which it was permitted, by the same authority, that it should be performed by a layman. But though David ate of the shew-bread, yet the rule which forbade its use by any but the priests, was not thereby abolished; and, such necessary deviations from the fixed course, can never rationally be mistaken for the course itself.

### *The Lord's Supper.*

The essential part of the Eucharist is the symbolical use of bread and wine, according to the recorded institution. A corruption in the celebration of this Sacrament might take place in two

have been long in existence. For, had they been a forgery of Eusebius's day, the author of them would probably have been known to him, and therefore have been exposed. Their continued interpolation, even to a subsequent period, is possible and likely.

\* Ignat. Ep. ad Smyrn. c. 8.

ways; either by omitting any of that essential part, or by appending to it circumstances inconsistent with its true character. Of both species of corruption we are bound to acquit the primitive uninspired Church<sup>f</sup>. The primitive Christians were

<sup>f</sup> The addition of *water* to the sacramental elements, of which occasional mention is made, might have been in conformity with the general custom of drinking wine diluted. Still, it seems strange, that the setting on the table separately both water and wine should be so specifically noticed. Witness Justin Martyr, (Apol. ii. p. 97.) προσφίρεται τῇ προστάτῃ τῶν ἀδελφῶν ἄρτος, καὶ ποτήριον ὕδατος καὶ κραμάτος: and again, ἄρτος προσφίρεται καὶ οἶνος καὶ ὕδωρ. Accordingly, the expressions made use of in Irenæus, to denote that the bread and wine were prepared for distribution, are *quando mixtus calix et fractus ponis*, (lib. v. c. 4.) The Greek Church retains the custom to this day, and adds warm water. Possibly the custom may have been thus scrupulously observed by many, from a desire to express more exactly the precious blood-shedding which took place on the cross, and which was not, it may be observed, an effusion of blood alone, but of water and blood. That this circumstance should have been so dwelt on, will hardly be wondered at, when we consider the solemn manner in which St. John delivers his testimony to the fact: "One of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came thereout blood and water. And he that saw it bare record, and his record is true: and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe," (John xix. 34, 35.) To the same circumstance perhaps his words in his first Epistle may refer: "This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water alone, but by water and blood," (chap. v. 6.) St. John is the only Evangelist who has recorded the flowing of water and blood from our Lord's side; and it is somewhat remarkable, that he is also the only one who has recorded "the beginning of miracles," the conversion of water into wine at Cana. (John ii. 1, 2.) Had the miracle any meaning connected

guiltless, too, of the conversion of this peculiar mean of grace into a rite common to the Jewish and the Pagan religions. Towards this it was that the current of prejudice ran strongest. In this most solemn act of the new religion there must have been a perpetual craving, both in Jewish and Gentile convert, to recognize a substitute for the altar and the repeated *sacrifice*. It was a diseased appetite for a forbidden object, which idolatrous habits had created in the one, and real piety perhaps in the other, and which could only be corrected gradually. Looking back upon the scene, with our experience of the actual corruptions which thence arose, we may be disposed to censure even the concessions (trifling as they were) which these primitive rulers and preachers made; we may be disposed to wish, that they had never ventured to call the Lord's table an altar, or the bread and wine a sacrifice. But that they did it innocently, no one can doubt, who merely reads the few remains of those writers who have employed this language, and finds so little fondness, so plain an aversion, to dwell on any circumstance of pomp connected with the Christian ceremonies. They could hardly be expected to foresee the extent of mischief, which afterwards connected itself with these innocent, inadvertent attempts, "to

with the fact which he so pointedly attests, and, if so, what was that meaning?

be all things to all men." The original use of those terms was certainly not as appropriate names, but as figurative expressions, to illustrate their subject.

The principles of the Church's establishment, as recorded in Scripture, and the practical application of those principles, as displayed in the ministry of their inspired predecessors, were all too recent and fresh on their minds, for any question to arise concerning the *persons* who were entitled to this great Christian privilege—the communion of the body and blood of Christ. Among the essential distinctions between the old and the new dispensations of God, no one was more prominent than that the former admitted of different classes among those whom it embraced, and of different degrees of privilege and communion, for the Jew, for the proselyte of righteousness, and for the devout Gentile : while in the latter, the partition wall had been thrown down, the veil had been rent. Against this act of uniformity then, which had been so carefully preserved by the apostles, in their preaching and their practice, they were not likely to offend. To have reserved any participation of the Eucharist for the ministers alone, or for any one privileged class of believers, would have been too manifest a violation of this great principle ; whatever temptation might present itself in the prejudice of Jew and Gentile in favour of an officiating minister, who should remind them of a



priest<sup>g</sup>. All were not only admitted equally, but all were invited, to partake of this act of communion; and, indeed, it was long thought to be inconsistent with a Christian's profession to be otherwise than a regular communicant<sup>h</sup>.

The administration of this Sacrament, as well as of Baptism, was limited to the ordained ministry, who officiated by authority derived from their bishop<sup>i</sup>. That any difference of administration, such as now obtains, between the priests' and deacons' office, had its origin so early, cannot be asserted. Justin Martyr<sup>k</sup> speaks of the distribution of the bread and wine as belonging to the deacons' office; and in the Apostolical Constitutions, the direction given is, that the bread be delivered by the bishop, and the wine by the deacon<sup>l</sup>.

Whether the custom of sending a portion of the consecrated elements to the absent and sick, or that which is still preserved in our own Church, of performing the service in the chambers of the sick, was so early established, is likewise uncertain. With respect to this latter custom, that it is of great antiquity at least, is undoubted; nor can any

<sup>g</sup> ἱερεύς.

<sup>h</sup> The Apostolical Canons, can. 10. direct that absentees from communion shall be amenable for their neglect. So too the Council of Antioch, A. D. 340.

<sup>i</sup> Ignat. Ep. ad Smyrn. c. 8.

<sup>k</sup> Apol. ii. p. 27.

<sup>l</sup> Constitut. Ap. lib. viii. c. 13.

objection be urged against its lawfulness. Still, it deserves to be considered, whether erroneous notions and superstitious feelings have not been very generally fostered through this practice. The Eucharist celebrated in private, and amongst a few attendants on a sick bed, ceases to be looked on in its true light, as an act of the Christian congregation, celebrating its union, as such, with Christ, and within itself. Its celebration under circumstances which thus obscure its most prominent characteristics, may cause weak minds to attach, almost unconsciously, the notion of a *charm*, to the ceremony. It may, accordingly, be often desired and demanded, as if it possessed a talismanic influence on the dying, and was indispensable to the safe exit of the Christian. It is not so much on habitual communicants that this feeling can operate mischievously; it is on those who either never communicating, or not being in habitual communion, reserve this one act of conformity, for the season of sickness or of death. To persons under such circumstances, a visiting minister's exhortation to receive the Eucharist is surely misplaced. It might be better, perhaps, even to dissuade such an one from his purpose, if he desired it. It is scarcely a time for the stricken sinner in this manner to attempt reparation of his former neglect. For that neglect, he should be instructed to pray to God for forgiveness, among the sins which he shall then specifically confess to him; and to resolve,

that if it shall please God to restore him to the assemblies of his saints on earth, there, where alone it is strictly appropriate, to begin and to continue the observance of the special rite of Christian communion <sup>m</sup>.

*Agapæ, or Love Feasts.*

Among the acts of communion which Christians celebrated as members, not of particular Christian societies, but of the whole Christian body, the *Agapæ*, or Feasts of Love, require some mention. Agreeing so far in their character with the Lord's Supper, they seem to have had some further connection with the celebration of this Sacrament; and, accordingly, to have been held, either immediately before, or immediately after, the Communion-Service. As this primitive custom is less familiar

<sup>m</sup> Bp. Burnet represents the introduction of the custom into the Church of England, as an innocent substitute for the superstitious practice of sending portions of the Eucharist to the chambers of the sick. "It was also appointed, that the Sacrament should be given to the sick, and not to be sent from the church, but consecrated by their bed-sides; since Christ had said, that where two or three were assembled in his name, he would be in the midst of them. But (adds he) it is too gross a relic of the worst part of popery, if any imagine, that after an ill life, some sudden sorrow for sin, with a hasty absolution, and the Sacrament, will be a passport to heaven, since the mercies of God in Christ are offered in the Gospel only to those who truly believe, sincerely repent, and do change the course of their lives." Abridged History, book ii.

to us now than those which have been perpetuated to our own age, some fuller consideration of it may not be unacceptable.

It was usual for Christians to add to the celebration of the Lord's Supper a frugal meal, of which all the communicants partook. This Love Feast, as it was named, was furnished out of oblations, which it was customary, as now, for the congregation to make; part being set aside for the clergy fund, the remainder was employed in providing this common table.

That this remarkable custom was not merely a charitable provision for the poor, supplying them with an occasional meal at the expense of their more affluent brethren, nor any display of ordinary social feeling, may be inferred from the circumstance, that it was celebrated in the house of prayer, and connected with the most solemn portion of divine service. For meetings, the object of which was the relief of hunger, or social relaxation, some other time and place would more properly have been chosen. "What! have ye not houses to eat and drink in?" (writes St. Paul to the Corinthians,) "or despise ye the Church of God, and shame them that have not?" "If any man hunger, let him eat at home". The union, indeed, of charity and social feeling with its religious object, (whatever that object was,) may be admitted, and would

<sup>n</sup> 1 Corinth. xi. 22, and 34.

be by no means inconsistent with it. It would rather remind us of that similar union of miracle and mercy, which was conspicuous throughout the Saviour's dealings with mankind. But the exercise of charity or social feeling could not have been the only or the principal thing designed.

The early Fathers speak of it as an apostolical rite<sup>o</sup>; and the same may be inferred from some allusions in St. Paul's Epistles<sup>p</sup>, and still more

<sup>o</sup> See Bingham's *Eccl. Antiq.* book xv. chap. vii. sec. 6. Ignatius mentions the rite, *Ep. ad Smyrn.* sec. 8. and in Tertullian there is a full account of it. *Apol.* c. 39.

<sup>p</sup> In the passage particularly referred to, (1 Cor. xi. 17.) in which he is charging the Corinthians with profaning the Sacrament, by mingling with it indecent revelling, his words certainly seem to imply the existence of some meal, connected indeed with the celebration of the Eucharist, but more of a meal than is perhaps consistent with any supposable mode of distributing and partaking of the consecrated elements. There is another passage in the same Epistle which probably points to it, (chap. v. ver. 11.) In directing the Corinthians to pass sentence of excommunication on an incestuous member, he enumerates several crimes besides, for which the offender ought to be punished by the Church with complete excommunication,—total exclusion from all, even the slightest act of communion as Christians; “with such an one,” he writes to bid them “not even to eat.” This is, very probably, an allusion to the *Agapæ*; because excommunication or exclusion from any society, as a rightful act of the society, can only extend to exclusion from those privileges and exercises which the members share *as members of that society*, and no further. And, besides, the social intercourse of the table would hardly be characterised as the least of all *ordinary* intercourse; although it may very well be considered as the slightest act of Christian communion.

Another passage may be quoted from St. Paul's writings, as



certainly from a passage in the Epistle of Jude <sup>4</sup>. It is enough, however, to know that the rite was generally observed by the immediate successors of the apostles, and on the alleged authority of apostolical precedent.

Its most remarkable feature, was its apparent connection with an important object of faith. It will readily occur to all, that the terms in which the Holy Ghost and its operations are described in Scripture, are all figurative—"Light," "Life," "the Spirit," and "the Holy Spirit." So, too, the change effected thereby in the Christian's condition is called "regeneration," or "a new birth." He is termed "a new man after God, which is created in righteousness<sup>1</sup>," "a new creature<sup>2</sup>," and

apparently containing an allusion to the existence of this rite in the very earliest stage of the Christian establishment. It is his account of St. Peter's behaviour at Antioch, during the attempt of the Judaizing faction there, to enforce on the Gentile converts the observance of the Mosaic law. (Epistle to the Galatians, chap. ii.) "Before" (says he) "that certain came from James, he did *eat with the Gentiles*; but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision." It is certainly possible that St. Paul may be here speaking only of the ordinary intercourse of hospitality; but, as this act is specified, as the main token by which St. Peter was supposed to have sanctioned the notion, that an uncircumcised Christian was no *complete* Christian; it is more reasonable to interpret it of some religious intercourse.

<sup>4</sup> Ver. 12.

<sup>1</sup> Ephesians iv. 24.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Corinth. v. 17.

the like. The reason of this is obvious. The ideas to be conveyed were altogether new, and new or borrowed terms were, therefore, required to express them.

At the same time, the ideas so conveyed are intelligible enough for our purpose. We are taught by all these various expressions, (and the *variety* of expression seems designed to prevent a *literal* interpretation of any one,) that the effect of the Holy Ghost's descent has been, not merely increased assistance from God, but, as it were, a constitutional change in man; the addition of some abiding principle which belonged not to his original nature;—as far as it is connected with the fruits of righteousness, having a common object with conscience, but more certain and effectual; even “God working within us to will and to do of his good pleasure<sup>†</sup>.” It is called “Life,” then, because of the analogy between the imparting of this new element of goodness, and the original creation of Adam, with which it is sometimes contrasted. So St. Paul, “The first man, Adam, was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening Spirit.” “In Adam all die, in Christ shall all be made alive<sup>‡</sup>.” It is called “Light” too, because of its use in guiding us from error into “the way of life;” or, perhaps, in allusion to that holy light in which God's people of old were wont to recognize the

<sup>†</sup> Philip. ii. 13.

<sup>‡</sup> 1 Cor. xv. 22, 45.

symbol of the Divine presence. And hence it is written, that “ God is light<sup>x</sup>,” and, that “ if the light that be in us be darkness, how great will be that darkness<sup>y</sup>.” Hence too the precept, “ Let your *light* so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven<sup>z</sup>.” It is also called *Spirit*, because it is God unseen, unfelt; or rather, because it is God worshipped no longer in connection with any visible symbol, or holy dwelling-place; neither at Jerusalem, (as the Lord told the Samaritan woman,) nor yet on Mount Gerizim, but in “ *spirit* and in truth<sup>a</sup>.” “ The wind (πνεῦμα) bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the *Spirit*<sup>b</sup>,” (πνεύματος.)

Among the terms adopted to express this new relation between God and man, is ἀγάπη; which in our Bible translation is rendered sometimes *love*, and sometimes *charity*, apparently without any rule for the difference of translation. It is called love; yet it is not strictly speaking, love. The word wanted, was one to express the benevolent relation of God to man, and the corresponding disposition of man to God, in this his last mode of manifesta-

<sup>x</sup> 1 John i. 5.

<sup>y</sup> Matthew vi. 23.

<sup>z</sup> Matthew v. 16.

<sup>a</sup> John iv. 21, 24.

<sup>b</sup> John iii. 8.

tion; as residing no longer in a temple or holy city, but in that figurative temple, of which we are the constituent parts; which has been “built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building, fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord. In whom we also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit<sup>c</sup>.” Some word was wanted, in short, to express that particular kind of devotional feeling towards God, as filling this his final dwelling place with his Glory; which the Israelite felt, when he trod the courts of the house of God, or at the hour of prayer looked on it from afar, or turned his face to the quarter of the heavens in which it stood. That associated love, with which the old worshipper of God was wont to exclaim, “Lord, I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honour dwelleth.” “If I forget thee, O

<sup>c</sup> Hence we find this in the second century among the elementary truths professed by the catechumens at their baptism. Tertull. de Bapt. c. vi. *Cum sub tribus et testatio fidei et sponsio salutis pignorentur, necessario adjicitur Ecclesiæ mentio; quoniam, ubi tres, id est, Pater, Filius, et Spiritus Sanctus, ibi Ecclesia, quæ suum corpus est.* And, accordingly, it is among the Articles of the Apostles' Creed, “I believe in the Holy Ghost,—the holy Catholic Church,—the communion of saints;” of which clauses “the communion of saints” was not added until the fourth century; probably, when the preceding expression ceased to be generally understood, and the truth conveyed by it required a new mode of enunciation. See Eph. ii. 20—22.

Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning<sup>d</sup>;" that associated love, was to be transferred to a society made the new "habitation of God through the Spirit<sup>e</sup>;" and this was expressed by the term ἀγάπη.

In this secondary application of the word then, it may be interpreted to mean, either the disposition of God to man, as dwelling in him by the Holy Spirit; or, the corresponding feeling of man to God in that relation. And, as this spirit of love, which He hath given, (1 Tim. i. 14.) becomes ours, only as members of a society, the Christian's endeavour to preserve and cherish this holy union, is necessarily connected with his social behaviour as a Christian, and is, in short, the main principle of it. Hence the continual blending in the Scripture precepts, of the command to love God and our brethren, as if it were one and the same thing; *e. g.* "He that loveth God, loveth his brother also." "He who loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen." "We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren." "Every one that loveth is born of God." "He who seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him<sup>f</sup>?" In some of them this interpretation

<sup>d</sup> Psalm xxvi. 8. and cxxxvii. 5.

<sup>e</sup> Eph. ii. 22.

<sup>f</sup> 1 John iv. 20, 21. iii. 14. also iv. 7. iii. 17.



is suggested by the peculiar mode of expression ; as in the last, in which the love of God is spoken of, according to the phrase so often applied to the Holy Spirit, as “ dwelling in us.” The same may be observed of that which describes the being born of God as the effect of loving ; the Scripture language elsewhere being, that we are “ so born of water and of the Spirit<sup>g</sup>.”

It was from our blessed Lord’s discourses that this, (as many other terms) of the inspired writers, appears to have acquired its secondary meaning. Among many passages may be noticed especially that in which He tells his disciples, “ As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you<sup>h</sup> ;” and, again, his prayer to the Father for Christians in all ages, “ That they all may be one,” prayed He, “ as thou Father art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us ; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them ; that they may be one, even as we are one ; I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one ; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me. Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me be with me where I am ; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me ; for thou lovedst *me* before the foundation of the world. O righteous

<sup>g</sup> John iii. 5.      <sup>h</sup> John xv. 9.

Father, the world hath not known thee ; but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me. And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it : that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them<sup>i</sup>." This passage is given at length, because the particular use of the term is only apparent from the context ; as, for instance, in the last verse, " That the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them," is a form of expression cast in the same mould with one of the preceding sentences, " the glory that thou gavest me I have given them," by which, no doubt, the gift of the Holy Spirit was intended, agreeably to the sacred language, in which the term Glory is made to signify any manifestation of the divine nature.

The apostles, accordingly, continually employ the word in a way which can scarcely be explained but by such a reference as this. We read of the " love of the Spirit," of " love in the Spirit," of " faith working by love," of " the love of God being *shed abroad* in our hearts," (another coincidence with the ordinary language which describes the gift of the Spirit,) of " the edifying in love ;" and the apostolical blessing is, that " the God of love may be with us<sup>k</sup>."

Of St. Paul's writings, the twelfth and thirteenth

<sup>i</sup> John xvii. 21.

<sup>k</sup> Rom. xv. 30. Col. i. 8. Gal. v. 5, 6. Eph. iv. 16. 2 Cor. xiii. 11.

chapters of the First Epistle to the Corinthians may be selected as furnishing the most striking instance of the use of the word by him. The topic (as he expressly tells us) is spiritual gifts; and in discussing this, he contrasts the *extraordinary* gifts of the Spirit, with ἀγάπη, or charity; meaning by this latter, as it is plain, the ordinary influence of the Spirit; and declares, that it was this, and not the former, out of which arose the moral qualifications of a Christian—that the gifts of miracle, of prophecy, and of tongues, were useful for the planting of Christianity, but this for the salvation of the possessor. Hence, too, he speaks of it as “never failing,” as “abiding;” whereas the extraordinary operations were to cease or fail. This was the permanent gift, the efficacy of which was to go further than its accompaniments faith and hope; greater than faith, and greater than hope; because it is even from this principle that the Christian “believeth all things, hopeth all things.” “And now *abideth* these three,” (*abideth* as opposed to the extraordinary graces of the early Church, of which he had been speaking,) “faith, hope, and charity, but the greatest of these is charity<sup>1</sup>.”

<sup>1</sup> Compare 1 Corinthians xiii. with Galatians v. 19. and the correspondence between, what is called in the one the result of ἀγάπη, and in the other the fruits of the Spirit, will be apparent. The following scheme will serve to shew the main coincidences.

In no part of the New Testament, however, is the peculiar use of this term so striking, as in St. John's writings. "That God is love," and that "if we love one another God dwelleth in us<sup>m</sup>," is the thought, that entwines itself into all he writes, whether narrative or precept. To "the beloved" is his habitual form of address. When he describes what St. Paul would call "neglecting the gift within thee," the language is, "Thou hast left thy first love<sup>n</sup>;" faith in the indwelling of the Holy Spirit is called by him, "believing the love that God hath in us," and the like. And accordingly it is said of him, that when incapable of preaching and teaching any longer, his only exhortation used to be, "little children, love one another."

No one passage in his writings is more remarkable than the fourth chapter of his first Epistle. "No man," writes he, "hath seen God at any time. If

Characteristics of *ἀγάπη*, from  
1 Corinthians xiii.

- I. Μακροθυμίᾱ,  
πάντα ὑπομένει.
- II. Χρηστίεσται.
- III. Πάντα πιστεύει.
- IV. Οὐ χαίρει ἐπὶ τῇ ἀδικίᾳ,  
συγχαίρει δὲ τῇ ἀληθείᾳ.
- V. Οὐ παροξύνεται.
- VI. Οὐ λογίζεται τὸ κακόν.

Fruits of the Spirit, from Gala-  
tians v.

- I. Μακροθυμία.
- II. Χρηστότης.
- III. Πίστις.
- IV. Χαρά.
- V. Πραότης.
- VI. Ἀγαθωσύνη. κ. τ. λ.

<sup>m</sup> 1 John iv.

<sup>n</sup> Rev. ii. 4.

we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us. Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit. And we have known," adds he, "and believed the love that God hath *in us*<sup>o</sup>; God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as *he is, so are we in this world*<sup>p</sup>." Now if we compare the first sentences of this paragraph with a corresponding verse in his Gospel, what has been asserted of his meaning will, perhaps, be more evident. In the Gospel, when he is giving an account of the manifestation of God in Christ, his language is, "No man hath seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared him<sup>q</sup>." In the Epistle, when he is dwelling on the manifestation of God by the Spirit, he writes, "No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another God dwelleth *in us*, and his love is perfected *in us*<sup>r</sup>;" following it up by the several expressions already quoted, all conveying the same truth, that this manifestation is made by God's Spirit *in us* as a society; and it is this union, and the feelings

<sup>o</sup> Ἐν ἡμῖν. Our translation is, "to us."

<sup>p</sup> 1 John iv. 12, 13, 16, 17.

<sup>q</sup> John i. 18.

<sup>r</sup> "Be ye perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."



arising out of it, which constitute the love of which he writes—that love which God hath *in us*; God being love\*.

It can hardly be questioned, that by this use of the term in the language of the apostles, must be interpreted its meaning as applied to that ancient Christian rite, which celebrated the union of Christians as members of Christ—as the common abode of the Holy Ghost. They were called *Agapæ*, and were always appended to the administration of the Sacrament; to intimate, no doubt, the close connection, which, according to Scripture, exists between the Saviour's death, and that blessing for which it was expedient he should go away†. As by the Eucharist they were reminded more especially of his dying for our sins; so in this kindred ceremony, they commemorated his return and eternal abode with them by his Spirit. It con-

\* In the long list of errors charged on Peter Lombard, whose works once obtained a place in the divinity studies of all the universities of Europe, to the neglect of Scripture, one noted, is, that he identified *ἀγαπή* with the Holy Ghost. It is by no means my intention to defend his application of the word; but his notion clearly arose from observing that the word was used by the writers of the New Testament in a peculiar sense, and one connected with the doctrine of the Holy Spirit. His view is contained in lib. i. distinct. 17. of the small volume of his works, printed A. D. 1528. and is noticed by Mosheim in his *Elementa Dogmaticæ Theologiæ*, p. 68.

† The Holy Ghost was not yet [given,] because Jesus was not yet glorified. “If I go not away the Comforter will not come.”

tinued to be observed until the middle of the fourth century ; when, owing to some abuses in the celebration of it, it was abolished by a decree of the Council of Laodicea<sup>a</sup>.

As no account of its institution is registered in Scripture, it may be considered as one of those points of apostolical practice, the observance of which, in after times, was, by virtue of this omission, left by the Holy Spirit to the discretion of the Church. Nor can it be doubted, that if its continuance was once found generally incompatible with the decorum of the Church, its revival now would be still more objectionable.

### *Public Prayers.*

The regular observance of public prayer has been already noticed under another head, when its character, as one means of dispensing the contents of Scripture, was the point in view. But, although this was one purpose which the public liturgies have served in all ages of the Church, yet is it not their chief or most obvious one. We assemble in common prayer, as a mode of obtaining that divine grace, which is promised to us as members of a community ; that we may worship, not only towards, but in, the temple of the Holy Ghost ;

<sup>a</sup> Can. 28. tom. i. p. 1501. of Labbis Councils. Its celebration was still, however, permitted in private houses, as appears from Canon 27. of the same Council.

which temple is, not the Corinthian Church alone, but every Church in every age. Ignatius's exhortation to the Church of Ephesus proves that the glorious impression of this great truth, made by the inspired teachers on the Christian world, was still fresh and strong. "Make a point," writes he, "of frequently assembling to offer thanksgiving and glory to God; for as oft as you gather together, the powers of Satan are quelled, and his destruction fails, when this your act of faith is as the act of one mind\*."

As to the particular prayers adopted by the earliest Churches, it is well known that the greater part of the Liturgy of the Church of England has been framed on the basis of those which seemed to be at once the most ancient and the most accordant with Scripture. Yet, if we except the Lord's Prayer, no obligation is imposed on any Church to adopt or to retain forms except as convenient; and it was doubtless from a view of this principle, that no public prayers are left among the materials of sacred record; that each Church, in every age, may be at liberty to form a liturgy for itself. The obligation is to have *some*, but not any one instituted form. Accordingly, the custom of bishops assuming the liberty of composing each his own liturgy, may be traced so far back, as to lead us to a fair presumption that it

\* Ep. ad Ephes. c. 13.

existed at a period within the limits of the present inquiry<sup>7</sup>.

The Lord's Prayer is mentioned as an exception ; not that even this seems to have been intended by our Lord as the peculiar design of his giving us that Prayer. Its capability of being adopted by all ages and Churches would, however, leave no plea for ever discontinuing its use ; and the framing of it by our Lord himself, would of course make its omission, under such circumstances, imply a want of due reverence towards Him. It was unquestionably used by the early Churches in their public liturgies, and its use was considered by many as an indispensable duty<sup>8</sup>.

*Certain Rites which fall into a distinct class.*

All religious ceremonies have one sole legitimate object ; they are the outward signs and formal acts of communion with God ; and with a view to that communion they are all instituted and celebrated. It is true, that the original character of a religious rite may in the course of time be lost, and some different object may be proposed and effected by it. Worldly policy, or any views of present convenience, may so far interfere with the use of it,

<sup>7</sup> See Bingham's *Ecc. Antiq.* book ii. chap. vi. sect. 2.

<sup>8</sup> See particularly Tertullian, *de Oratione*, c. 9. and *Ap. Constitut.* lib. vii. c. 44.

as to give it a political or otherwise worldly character; but it loses its spirituality in proportion. Not that the two objects are incompatible; but that such is the *risk* incurred by allowing them to be associated. The ceremony of marriage is a religious act; but the same rite is in most Christian nations made likewise to serve as the form of the civil contract; and civil privileges and penalties are made to depend on it. And out of this union, no very serious evil, perhaps, has arisen, to detract from the advantages of the arrangement. Oaths, again, are religious acts; and the more formal and solemn the oath, the more properly is it to be styled a religious ceremony<sup>a</sup>. The convenience of a pledge, which might pass in courts of justice for a sort of coined and stamped truth, and subject him who presented it insincere and adulterated to a penalty, analogous to that attached to forgery,—the convenience of this has been always recognized by the magistrate; and even in heathen countries, a religious ceremony has been adopted as the most appropriate form. In the same manner as men have fixed on gold and silver for money by universal consent, because

<sup>a</sup> See Burnet's Exposition of the Thirty-nine Articles, Art. ix. "If we consider the matter upon the principles of natural religion, an oath is an act of worship and homage done to God;" and again, in reference to the prophecy of Jeremiah iv. 2. "here an oath religiously taken is represented as a part of that worship, which all nations shall offer up to God under the new dispensation."



of some intrinsic attraction in those metals, which attraction afterwards has become a secondary consideration ; so it has fared with oaths. They were admired for their holy solemnity, and the hold which they possessed on men's consciences, and, therefore, were chosen for the political purposes which they have been made to serve. Here, it must be confessed, the experiment has been of a more doubtful result, than in the preceding instance. The great demand for them as a political convenience, has proportionably diminished their religious character, and profaned in some measure that which was holy, and used by the holy.

Whilst some religious institutions are thus adopted into civil societies, on the other hand, a custom of mere human origin may be lawfully converted into an act of communion with God, and incorporated by the Church into the great body of those common rites, to which, generally, a promise of grace is annexed. To which class belong the burial service, the religious part of the ceremony of crowning kings, and the like. Hence, in different ages and countries, the number of sacred rites will be made to differ, or, remaining the same, to change their character. How far their multiplication may be allowed, and to what extent human institutions may borrow spiritual influence, must, of course, be determined by the principles given by Christ and the Holy Spirit, for the formation and re-

gulation of every Church. Only, in the inquiry concerning such rites, it must be borne in mind, that their character is always twofold; and that they are accidentally made the means of grace.

Such being the character of these rites, it is unnecessary to pursue any further inquiry respecting them. I shall accordingly proceed at once to notice what properly follow the Sacraments, the Love Feasts, and the Public Prayers,—those ceremonies, namely, which are the Church's appointed means of grace for individuals, or for creating particular offices.

*Ordination, Confirmation, &c.*

Of these, the ordination of ministers is the most prominent. In the narrative of the Acts we find no specific direction given for the celebration of such a form; and yet the use of some form is left binding, because it is recorded. Again, although no complete ceremony is recorded, because, doubtless, it was not intended that the Church, in all ages, should be tied down, under all circumstances, even to the apostolical form; still, besides the general appointment of prayers, the laying on of hands was enjoined. This part of the ceremony then must have been recorded, because intended to be perpetual; and, accordingly, in looking back on the view we have left us of the first uninspired

Church, we should not expect even to find all Churches necessarily agreeing in their forms of ordination prayers, but we should expect all to use the imposition of hands. If we perceived that any neglected to do so, we should have possession of a fact which would enable us to say, that their proceedings were irregular. But there is no evidence of such a deviation from apostolical practice and scriptural views; and we are therefore bound to suppose, that ordination was still continued by imposition of hands and by prayers.

Confirmation is another of this class of rites which deserves a short notice. It evidently arose out of the formal act of giving to the new Christian the confirming sign of the real descent of the Holy Ghost on him. After these miraculous manifestations were withdrawn from the Church, this venerable rite was employed as a useful addition to those outward means of grace, through which the Church was appointed to communicate and cherish the ordinary gifts of the Spirit. Although always now blended with forms of common prayer, yet in itself it is an act relating to an individual, and as such has been considered here. Like ordination, its essential ingredient is the laying on of hands, which, accordingly, has been the invariable part of the ceremony from the earliest times. It was long practised in the Church in strict con-

formity with the apostolic usage, immediately after baptism, whether of infants or adults ; and it was, probably, only when the return of sensible manifestations had generally ceased to be expected, that its more rational use was established.





## CHAP. VI.

### WHAT MEASURES THE FIRST UNINSPIRED CHURCH PURSUED FOR SELF-PRESERVATION.

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**BESIDES** those measures, the object of which is to preserve or to dispense the recorded revelation, the Church is obliged to provide some especially for its own preservation. Stationed as guard over this divine treasure, it is required to use all diligence, not only to fulfil its office, but to keep itself strong and healthy, and well equipped for so trying a service. What course the primitive uninspired Christians pursued with this view, is the point of inquiry at which we are arrived.

And in order to estimate the wisdom of their plans and precautions, it will be necessary to connect them with a view of the dangers to which the Church was exposed, and which these provisions may be supposed designed to meet and counteract. These were various and unconnected: some internal, and arising from its own members; some external, and arising from strangers and enemies. In providing against both these, the Church enjoyed the same sort of assistance which guided it in all its other proceedings,—the recorded principles on which the Church was formed, illustrated by the application of those principles in the min-

istry of the apostles. The uninspired Church was assailed by perils precisely similar to those which it had witnessed successfully opposed, by means still in its power. Within itself it was liable to heresies and schisms, and so had it ever been. From without, it saw danger in the wisdom of the unbelieving portion of mankind, as well as in their power ; but the effect of both had been proved. Let us see, therefore, how far it profited by the examples which had gone before.

The first measures of self-preservation adopted by any society would naturally be addressed to its own members ; and these, in the Christian society, would have in view one of two things ; either the profession of orthodox faith, or conformity to instituted practices. Whenever then, in the first place, any doctrines of Scripture were likely to be misrepresented, or any unscriptural doctrine likely to be introduced, it would be the Church's care to enforce the true doctrine, and to guard against the false, by some specific appointment : and if any such abuse had actually occurred, its vigilance would be proportionably increased by the warning. It would not necessarily happen that the doctrines thus made prominent, and particularly guarded, because most exposed, would be in themselves the most important ; but any so circumstanced would still have a claim during the season of peril to this accidental preference ; as the parent watches more tenderly over the weak child, although intending thereby no

mark of preference or distinction to it above its brothers and sisters. The principal method devised by the Church from the earliest times for thus securing its members against the particular errors of belief, which foresight or experience had taught to be the most dangerous, has been to draw up formulas of faith, Creeds, Canons, Articles, and the like. A Creed, taught to the catechumens before baptism, put them on their guard on those points, whereon they were most likely to be assailed. Read constantly in the public assemblies, it reminded the whole Church, that the doctrines specified were among those, belief in which was implied by their becoming members of that community. Hence the early and original term for creed was *σύμβολον*, or “watch-word;” which, whether borrowed, as some of the Fathers assert, from military language, or, as others assert, from the signs of recognition in use among the heathen in their mysteries, denotes a test and a shibboleth, whereby each Church may know its own, and is circulated throughout its members as a warning against the snares of enemies or false brethren.

That the Church is authorized to set forth Christian doctrines, moulded into systems or into any convenient form, has been already shewn; and it has been also asserted, that in the present instance they were probably further sanctioned by apostolic example. Whether any portion of what is called *The Apostles’ Creed*, was actually so framed and

used by the apostles, or not, allusions to the use of similar forms may be, perhaps, discovered in several parts of the New Testament. Even so early as the baptism of the Ethiopian eunuch by Philip, we know that the profession of one article of faith, specifically, was required; and this, just the one which at that season was most likely to be made prominent: “I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God<sup>a</sup>,” nor is it unreasonable to interpret St. Paul’s directions to Timothy, in reference to the use of such specific articles, when he bids him “keep that which is committed to thy trust<sup>b</sup>”; avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science, falsely so called; which some professing have erred from the faith:” and again, “Hold fast the form of sound words which thou hast heard of me, in faith and love, which is in Christ Jesus. *That good thing which was committed unto thee<sup>c</sup> keep by the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in us.*”

The articles which would originally compose this formula, would, of course, be few; and this would in some measure render it unnecessary that they should be placed on record. But a more powerful reason suggests itself, why, supposing the inspired

<sup>a</sup> Acts viii. 37. The same profession was made by Peter to our Lord, in the name of all the apostles, “We believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God.” John vi. 69.

<sup>b</sup> 1 Tim. vi. 20. Τὴν παρακαταθήκην φύλαξου.

<sup>c</sup> 2 Tim. i. 13, 14. Τὴν καλὴν παρακαταθήκην.

Church to have made use of such a form, it should not be registered by it. It was systematic divinity, and framed into that systematic form to serve a special purpose, and would therefore have been an anomaly in the sacred record. To have recorded it with the apostolic sanction, would have given it the character and authority of Scripture; whereas it was only an illustration of that use which was to be made of Scripture in all ages<sup>d</sup>. It is, indeed, extremely probable, that a portion of the Apostles' Creed was formed and sanctioned by the apostles, and preserved for a time in the Church solely by tradition, on this very account<sup>e</sup>. The current tradition, that its origin was apostolical, is certainly entitled to some credit; although we may reject with certainty the story of each apostle contributing his quota, and thereby occasioning it to be

<sup>d</sup> Οὐχ, ὡς ἔδοξεν ἀνθρώποις, συντέθη τὰ τῆς πίστεως, ἀλλ' ἐκ πάσης γραφῆς τὰ ΚΑΙΡΙΩΤΑΤΑ συλλεχθέντα μίαν ἀναπληροῖ τὴν τῆς πίστεως διδασκαλίαν. S. Cyril, Catech. cited by Bishop Pearson in his Exp. of the Creed, art. i. notes.

<sup>e</sup> Jerome alludes to the fact, (Ep. ad Psammachium adversus Err. Johan. Hieros. c. 9.) *In symbolo fidei et spei nostræ, quod ab Apostolis traditum, non scribitur in chartâ et atramento, sed in tabulis cordis carnalibus.* Other allusions of the same kind may easily, perhaps, be met with in the earlier writings of the Church. Petrus Chrysologus (an author of the fifth century) frequently makes use of language such as this: *Hæc fides, hoc sacramentum, non est committendum chartis, non scribendum literis, &c.* Serm. 57. In Symb. Apost.



called a *symbolum*. Indeed, the internal evidence of a certain portion of it corroborates this view so strongly, that it may be worth while to pause and examine the several clauses, with a view to determine which may, and which may not, be of so early a date<sup>f</sup>.

Bearing in mind then the object which such a formula of faith must have, let us take the first article, *I believe in God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth*. “He that cometh unto God,” writes St. Paul, “must believe that he is<sup>g</sup> ;” and the same cause which rendered it necessary for the apostle to make prominent this article of belief, no doubt might have occasioned it to be first in an apostolic formula. The whole clause considered together forcibly reminds us, too, of the opening of the book of Genesis, where this supreme and distinct Being is set forth, in opposition to the false notions of the world, as the Creator of Heaven and Earth ; of those very things which had furnished the chief objects of idolatry. Perhaps, then, the importance of specifying this great truth may have arisen from the temptations which old prejudice would foster in heathen converts, once more to corrupt religion as did their forefathers. The most ancient Creeds, too, confirm this view, by distinctly marking the unity of God, and thus more strongly

<sup>f</sup> See Appendix, [N.]

<sup>g</sup> Heb. xi. 6.

cautioning the Christian against polytheism. In those of Irenæus<sup>b</sup>, and of Origen<sup>i</sup>, it is “one God;” and in Tertullian’s “one or the only God<sup>k</sup>.”

But a further ground presents itself, for the employment of this article, in the very specific form in which it is now worded, even during the apostolic age. In a former portion of this inquiry, I had occasion to remark, that not only St. John, the latest of the sacred writers, but that St. Paul too, alludes to the existence of those wild fancies, with which the Gnostic theory was beginning to corrupt the Church. Some brief outline was also given of the general features of this source of extravagant errors. One of the most attractive principles seems to have been that, which solved the knotty question of the origin of evil. Among the thirty *Æons*, who occupied the original *Pleroma*, or sphere of pure Deity, *Sophia* (wisdom) was fabled to have produced, through intense desire to comprehend the greatness of the *πρωτότατος*, or first father, a monstrous birth, *Achamoth*<sup>l</sup>. This marvellous offspring was

<sup>b</sup> Lib. i. c. 2. and 19.

<sup>i</sup> Περὶ ἀρχῶν in Præfat.

<sup>k</sup> *Unum* and *unicum*. De Veland. Virg. c. i. De Præscript. adv. Hær. c. xiii. adv. Praxeam c. ii.

<sup>l</sup> Irenæi, lib. ii. c. 10. *Deum impie contemnunt non credentes, quoniam ex his quæ non erant, quemadmodum voluit, ea quæ facta sunt ut essent omnia fecit sua voluntate, quod enim dicunt ex lachrymis Achamoth humectam produsse substantiam, &c.* Achamoth is a Hebrew word, signifying the same as Wisdom.

Irenæus elsewhere laments the success of the Valentinians,

cast out of the heavenly space, and became the author of matter, and the mother of him whom they described as the Creator of the world, and whose imperfect and corrupt work it had been the province of certain *Æons* to correct. Their scheme of reformation was easily made a counterpart to the history of man's redemption; and, indeed, the foundation story itself, seems to have been framed with a similar design against the scriptural account of the fall of man, and the bringing in of sin and death into the world. Harmlessly absurd as all this may seem to us, yet we know that St. Paul and St. John feared lest it might deceive the very elect, and that many Christians were bewildered in their faith by it. Weighing then, with this view, the exact expression of the first article of the Apostles' Creed, in what period of the Church would it be more naturally framed than in the first? Contrary to these "endless genealogies" and "false oppositions<sup>m</sup>," it asserts that God is one and indivisible. In opposition to the notion, that the first father of the *Æons* took no part in the government of the

&c. in seducing τοὺς μὴ ἰδραῖαν τὴν πίστιν εἰς ἓνα θεὸν Πατέρα παντοκράτορα, διαφυλάσσοντας: and recommends the use of the Creed as a safeguard against these seductions, (see lib. i. c. l.) For a full account of these heresies his work may be consulted.

<sup>m</sup> Ἀντίθεσις, meaning, doubtless, the pairing off of the *Æons*, who were described as coupled, or *set off* in pairs. With reference to the same notion we may interpret an expression in Origen, (Dialog. 2.) when, speaking of the supreme Being, he adds, ὃς πάντων κρατῖ, ᾧ ἀντίκειται οὐδέν.

world, but left it to lower emanations, he is called παντοκράτωρ, “all-mighty,” or “all-governing;” and the impious fancy of a separate and evil creator, is condemned by the assertion, that it is He who is maker of heaven and earth”.

Art. II. *And in Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried, He descended into hell, the third day He rose again from the dead, He ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence He shall come to judge the quick and the dead.*

That an Article specifying belief in Jesus Christ as the Son of God, was likely to have been framed by the apostles themselves, may be inferred from the confession of the eunuch to Philip, before alluded to. Perhaps, indeed, the whole of the first clause of this second Article may have stood originally as we now have it; for “that Jesus was the Christ<sup>o</sup>,” was, we know, the very terms of that faith for which the Jews threatened their believing

<sup>n</sup> Some of the early heretics asserted, that the creation was the work of angels; but, probably, under every variety of expression they meant the same thing substantially, emissions or emanations from the source of all-pervading Deity. See Irenæus, lib. ii. c. 9. and Epiphanius, and Theodore, as referred to in King’s History of the Apostles’ Creed, p. 85.

<sup>o</sup> John ix. 22.

brethren with vengeance ; and all points of confession are united in that which Martha made to Jesus<sup>p</sup>, “ Yea, Lord, I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God.” To which may be added St. Peter’s celebrated avowal, “ Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God<sup>q</sup>.”

No article of the Christian religion could, indeed, have more required an early specification, and peculiar enforcement. The prejudice which it opposed, was the very bed of tares, which sprang around the tender plant of Christianity,—it was the Jewish prejudice ; and that, therefore, against which the earliest converts, who were Jews, and living among Jews, would require to be most studiously guarded. The particular clauses which follow, might have been gradually added, as occasion demanded ; but this must have been as old as Christianity itself. It is worthy of notice, too, that a change appears in the form of expressing belief in Jesus Christ, not only in the Nicene Creed, but in some other of the oldest Creeds, (as, for instance, in one of Irenæus,) which corresponds with what we should expect in a later period of the apostolic history. It is, “ in *one* Lord Jesus Christ ;” the addition of the term “ one,” being obviously rendered afterwards necessary, by the fancies of Cerinthus, and the like, that Christ

<sup>p</sup> John xi. 27.

<sup>q</sup> Matt. xvi. 16.



was, first, the Son of the Demiurgus, and that, secondly, on him one of the thirty *Æons* descended at his baptism, in the shape of a dove<sup>r</sup>.

To the rise of the Gnostic heresy we may, indeed, attribute the three subsequent clauses, without being able to determine, whether all did or did not belong to the Creed of the apostles' days. They would, certainly, not be inappropriate to the latter portion of that period. That Christ, the Son of God, "was conceived by the Holy Ghost;" that is, in the words of St. Luke, was "called the Son of God," because the Holy Ghost came upon the Virgin Mary, and "the power of the Highest overshadowed her<sup>s</sup>," was obviously levelled against this heresy just noticed; so too, that He "was born of the Virgin Mary," that is, was really man as well as God, and not the Son of the fabled *Demiurgus*; that He "suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried," all specify those several particulars which were inconsistent with the union of a superior *Æon* with Christ during his ministry, and his separation from Him on the cross; the favourite speculation of the Docetæ.

It not a little confirms this view, that we find

<sup>r</sup> Irenæi, lib. i. c. 25. and, again, lib. iii. c. 18. where he argues against the notion thus, *Si alter quidem passus est, alter autem impassibilis mansit; et alter quidem natus est, alter vero, in eum qui natus est, descendit, et rursus reliquit eum, non unus sed duo monstrantur.*

<sup>s</sup> Luke i. 35.

the earliest Fathers opposing, principally, these very errors, and in similar language. The Creed asserts, that Jesus Christ was "born of the Virgin Mary;" Ignatius, that "He was of Mary truly born<sup>t</sup>," "truly of the race of David, according to the flesh," "truly born of a Virgin<sup>u</sup>:" and Origen, "that he was born in reality, and not in appearance only." Again, the Creed asserts, that "He suffered under Pontius Pilate;" Ignatius, that "He was really persecuted under Pontius Pilate<sup>x</sup>." In Ignatius we read, that "he really suffered, not as some unbelievers assert, that he suffered only in appearance<sup>y</sup>:" and in Origen, "he suffered in truth," "and not by a phantom<sup>z</sup>."

<sup>t</sup> Ep. ad Trall. sec. 9.

<sup>u</sup> Ad Smyrn. sec. 1.

<sup>x</sup> Ad Trall. sec. 9.

<sup>y</sup> Ejusd. sec. 10.

<sup>z</sup> In præem. lib. *περὶ ἀρχῶν*. So too in the Creed we read, that "He was crucified, dead, and buried," as so many separate scriptural assertions inconsistent with the theory of the Docetæ.

The same view is enlarged on by other early writers. "The mere fact of his burial," writes Theodoret, "is sufficient to confute what they (the Docetæ) seek to establish; for it was neither his soul, nor his divine nature, which was deposited in the grave, but his body, for graves are prepared for bodies." Theodoret, quoted by King, p. 179. So, too, Petrus Chryologus, (in Symb. Sermon. 60.) *Sepultum dicis, ut veram carnem Christi, mortemque non perfunctoriam probet confessio sepulture*.

The specification of the time, by the expression under Pontius Pilate, was, doubtless, to destroy the claims of any false pretenders of any other period; such as those alluded to in the speech of Gamaliel, recorded in the Acts, ch. v. 36, 37.

The descent into hell was certainly not one of the original Articles of the Creed ; and when used, was first employed only as an equivalent expression for the term “buried,” which was omitted<sup>a</sup>. It was afterwards, however, adopted to denote something distinct from it, as both appear in the later Creeds ; or, what is more probable, the ejected term “buried” was now replaced ; and this nevertheless retained, because it contained the expression of a doctrine frequently set forth in the early Fathers, in opposition to the Gnostic heretics. These, according to Irenæus<sup>b</sup>, denied the salvation of the body, and maintained, that “the souls ascended into the heavens, unto their determined place, from whence they shall no more return unto their bodies.” So that it might have reference to the real power of death over Christ, as over all men ; in opposition to this notion of the reunion of a particle of the divine essence with its parent source<sup>c</sup>.

<sup>a</sup> In the Creed of the Church of Aquileia ; see Bishop Pearson on the Creed, art. v.

<sup>b</sup> Lib. i. c. 23. and in other passages.

<sup>c</sup> The interpretation put on the phrase by the framers of our Articles in the reign of Edward VI. was, “that the body of Christ lay in the grave until his resurrection ; but his Spirit, which he gave up, was with the spirits which were detained in prison or in hell, and preached to them, as the place in St. Peter testifieth.” The passage in St. Peter alluded to is ch. iii. 19. of his first Epistle. On the final revision of the Articles in Queen Elizabeth’s reign, this explanatory clause was omitted, in

The rising from the dead, is a point so often specified and made prominent in the preaching and teaching of the apostles, that we should certainly expect to find it in a Creed of their composing. Whatever occasioned them so to distinguish the doctrine in their discourses and writings, might be equally good reason for appointing it a place in their formulas of faith. Although witnesses of all Christ's course of ministry, yet we know, that they are in Scripture emphatically called "witnesses of the resurrection<sup>d</sup>;" and the sum of their preaching is described by St. Luke, as "Jesus and the resurrection<sup>e</sup>." We plainly gather from Scripture, too, that there was good reason for a particular enforcement of this great doctrine, because it was above all others the one most opposed to the preconceived notions of mankind. The immortality of the soul, as taught by some of the philosophers among the Gentiles, was even inconsistent with a resurrection of the whole man; and of the Jews themselves, perhaps even the pharisees had not quite comprehended the immortality of man to extend to a bodily resurrection. At all events, that strong bias in the Gentile world, to reject the doctrine as absurd, which caused St. Paul to be mocked at Athens, sufficiently accounts for the introduction of

consequence, probably, of exceptions which had been taken against it.

<sup>d</sup> Acts i. 22. iv. 33.

<sup>e</sup> Acts xvii. 18.

this clause into the earliest Creed. But, besides this need for such an Article, it will be remembered, that the Scriptures themselves allude to an error, which was making progress among Christians; a notion, “that the resurrection was past already<sup>f</sup>.” These heretics understood the doctrine, it would seem, in a figurative sense, merely as denoting “a new birth unto righteousness,” and might have given rise to the clause, or furnished an additional reason for its insertion.

The occasion of the words which follow, and which assert the ascension into heaven, was certainly the heresy of some Marcionites, disciples of Apelles; who introduced a variety in Marcion’s view, maintaining that Christ’s body, while on earth, was not a phantom, but that after he came down from heaven, he dissolved this earthly body, and created for himself a heavenly one, with which he ascended<sup>g</sup>. Hence, Irenæus, in repeating this Article in one of his creeds, expresses it by “the reception into the heavens of Jesus Christ, in the flesh<sup>h</sup>.” The addition too, “sitteth on the right hand of God, the

<sup>f</sup> 2 Tim. ii. 18.

<sup>g</sup> Tertullian, de præscript. adv. Hæres. c. 51. Epiphan. advers. Hæres. in Hæres. Apell. lib. i. t. iii. c. 111. St. Austin alludes to the same view in his De Fide et Symbol. 13. *Solet autem quosdam offendere quod credamus assumptum terrenum corpus in cælum: nesciunt quomodo dictum sit, seminatur corpus Animale, surget corpus Spirituale.*

<sup>h</sup> Irenæi, lib. i. c. 11. Τὴν Ἰησοῦν εἰς τοὺς οὐρανοὺς ἀνάλῃψιν τοῦ Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ.



Father Almighty," might have been made only in order to express more fully this view of the ascension, and to declare, that he who was born of the Virgin Mary, &c. ascended in the same body, and has since required and assumed none other<sup>1</sup>. In like manner, with a view to maintain the personal identity of Christ, as we are taught to expect him at his second coming, and not only while ascending and ascended, the further assertion might have been made, that he, the same, "shall come to judge the quick and the dead." The particular phrase "quick and dead," applied to the objects of his judicial appearance, may then be understood as denoting a further extension of the orthodox view, and implying, that Christ, although once dead, buried, and ascended into heaven, shall come again in like manner, and with the same body; and, that not only the "quick," those who are alive at his coming, shall in their unperished bodies stand before his tribunal, but "the dead" of all ages, awaking to a real bodily resurrection.

*I believe in the Holy Ghost; the holy catholic Church; the communion of saints; the forgiveness*

<sup>1</sup> It appears first in the writings of Tertullian, who mentions, what might lead us to suppose that it denoted the exertion of his mediatorial power at the right hand of God, namely, the existence of certain heretics, who supposed Christ's state of glory to be one of inactivity. *Affirmant carnem in cœlis vacuum sensu, ut vaginam, exempto Christo, sedere.* De Carne Christi, c. 24.

*of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting.*

Two of the clauses contained in this portion of the Creed did not, as far as we can judge from the remains of the Fathers, enter into any of the primitive or apostolical Creeds. These are, "the holy catholic Church," and "the communion of saints." The belief in the Holy Ghost formed, no doubt, one of the earliest; as one would expect, without any reference to historical testimony. In no particular was the early Christian's faith so severely tried, as in embracing the doctrine of his own intimate connection with, and influence by, that Holy Person, who, like the wind, from which He received his name, was viewless and impalpable, and only known by his effects. Hence, the necessity at first of accompanying the ceremony of baptism, when this insensible endowment takes place, with some sensible manifestation, to assure the sanctified of its reality. With the same view, the catechumen would require to be familiarized with a truth, which of all demanded the greatest effort of his faith; and the most experienced Christian too would need some perpetual remembrancer, to prevent oblivion or doubt of the golden rule of Christianity, "we walk by faith, and not by sight<sup>k</sup>."

When the clause concerning the Church was first made use of, the point of faith expressed, was

<sup>k</sup> 2 Corinthians v. 7.

simply belief in “the holy Church;” and it was added, perhaps, by way of enlargement upon the doctrine to which it is now appended,—the belief in the Holy Ghost. It is as a Church that we are the temple of the Holy Ghost;—as a society, that we perform those acts which are the appointed means of grace; and that society is therefore emphatically termed “the holy.” The introduction of the term “catholic” into the sentence, may be easily accounted for, by considering the ambiguity of the term Church. It conveyed a caution, that the Church using such a Creed should not confine its belief in the divine residence, to its own particular society; but extend it to that large body, of which Christ is the head, and all Churches are portions in particular. The “communion of saints” was a still later interpolation; and its introduction implies, that the preceding clause had become obscure, inasmuch as it is manifestly an explanation of it. The communion of saints or Christians is that which constitutes the essentials of a Church; and consists in those acts which are the means of grace, the outward forms, through which the Holy Ghost vouchsafes his operations.

Tertullian is the earliest who makes mention of an Article on the Church, and this is the view under which he represents it<sup>1</sup>, “After the declaration of faith has been made, and the pledge of

<sup>1</sup> De Baptismo.

salvation received in the name of the Trinity, there follows," he observes, " necessarily, a mention of the Church ; forasmuch, as where the three are, that is, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, there is the Church ; which is their body." Augustin has the same remark, " The right arrangement of the Articles of Confession required, that to the Trinity should be annexed the Church, as the house to its tenant, to a God his temple, the State to its founder <sup>m</sup>."

The clause on the forgiveness of sins has by some been applied to errors which arose in the second century, the errors of the Montanists and Novatians <sup>n</sup>. But there can be no doubt, that it was made an article of belief among the earliest Christians <sup>o</sup>. Without searching far into the probable need for such an article, it may be sufficient to observe, that remission of sins formed not only one of the most prominent points of the good tidings which the Gospel preachers announced, but one of the most objectionable. " Who is he that forgiveth sins also," expresses a scruple felt in com-

<sup>m</sup> Enchir. ad Laurentium, c. 15.

<sup>n</sup> This is the view of the learned and ingenious author of *The Critical History of the Apostles' Creed*, whose views generally have been adopted in the preceding remarks.

<sup>o</sup> It appears from Cyprian, that it was in the Creed which the Novatians themselves used. Cyp. Ep. 69. al. 76. ad Magnum. See Bingham's Eccl. Antiq. book x. chap. iv. sec. 4.

mon by Jew and Gentile<sup>p</sup>. It was, in truth, no accidental bias originating in the heated imagination of a theorist, which caused the doctrine to be unacceptable, and likely to be got rid of. The converted Pharisee, who trusted in his righteousness, and the Gentile convert, with his habitual view of unlimited human merit, capable of raising him to heaven, would naturally require some provision against the continual revival of feelings subversive of the true Christian spirit,—so contrary to the humiliating truth, that all, even the best, require “the forgiveness of sins.” The same may be observed of “the resurrection of the body,” or “the flesh;” which, although useful as a fence against the Gnostic follies already alluded to, must, we may conjecture, have been needed from the ancient prejudice of the Antichristian world, and is noticed by the earliest writers. The concluding words, “the life everlasting,” seem properly to belong to the foregoing, and to form with it one assertion; the foundation of which may be seen in our Saviour’s declaration, that “the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation<sup>q</sup>.”

<sup>p</sup> Luke vii. 49.

<sup>q</sup> John v. 28, 29.



If this view of the Apostles' Creed be correct, it is nothing improbable, that with the exception of the few clauses specified in the foregoing review of it, Creeds, in substance the same, were used during the apostolic age. At all events, little doubt can be entertained, that such was the case in the age immediately succeeding. We say *Creeds*, because the ancient creeds corresponded to what in modern Churches are called the Articles of Religion; or, more properly speaking, our Articles combine what were formerly distinct Creeds and Canons,—rules of faith and rules of conformity. This, being so, however intimate the union may be among orthodox Churches, the particular circumstances of each may require a different formula of belief, as well as of conformity; even as two confederate monarchies, or democracies, would not require precisely the same statutes and forms of administration. And so, although the Apostles' Creed be the substance of the earliest Creeds, and the precise language to a certain extent, yet there may have been many Creeds from the first; shaped by each Church with reference to its peculiar dangers of faith from without, or the prejudices of its own members within. Thus, as far back as we can trace the history of the early Creeds, that of Jerusalem was always distinct from that of Cæsaræa or Antioch, and all these, again, from those of Alexandria or of Rome; and this, during the period of harmony between these Churches.

The gradual infringement on the independent character of each separate Church, until it was extinguished by the papal usurpation, is a subject well worthy of more detailed discussion, than is compatible with the limits of this inquiry. Among the primitive Churches, each formed its own Creed, its own Liturgy, and regulated its own ceremonies and discipline. The first encroachment took its rise from an apparent convenience. When the ruling powers of the world were generally Christians, each kingdom was made to have the same Liturgy, &c. for all its Churches. To give an instance, when Spain and Gallia Narbonensis became one distinct kingdom, it was decreed by a Council, that there should be exact uniformity through all the Churches of these provinces'. The same principle, which thus produced an exact conformity among all the Churches of the same nation, became the ground of enforcing it, at length, on all the Churches of the empire. The first change was in the boundary line of a Church, which was made political instead of ecclesiastical. Men's minds being familiarized to this, and Churches being considered as national bodies, it was no very revolting

' " When Churches became subject to one political head, and national Churches arose from that distinction; then it was thought convenient by all the bishops of such a nation, to unite more closely in rituals and circumstantials of divine worship, as well as faith and substantials." Bingham's *Ecc. Antiq.* book xvi, c. i. sec. 13.

step which was taken by the Romish Church, when it made itself the metropolitan of national Churches; and gradually claimed that conformity to its decrees, and that obedience to its laws, which the metropolitan Church of every nation had acquired a right to expect from all Churches within the political pale of its jurisdiction. It was this miscalled Christian unity which the Reformation violated; and it is against such an universal Catholic Church, that all protestants are accused of being guilty of heresy and schism.

The custom of forming a code of rules for ceremonial conformity, was of later date than Creeds. The oldest are the *Apostolical Canons*, and the *Constitutions* of Clement, as they are called, although written confessedly long after the death of that bishop. The date of both these must be assigned, even on the view most favourable to their antiquity, to a period much later than that which is affected by the present inquiry; nevertheless, some use has been made of them, as records of an order of things, which, if *then* recorded, must have been established in part, some time before any such code of rules respecting it could have been framed.

The Creeds were not only taught to the catechumens, but were publicly read in the Churches; a custom which has become now almost impracticable. The Articles of the Church of England, comprising both articles of faith and rules of conformity, present too bulky a *symbolum* to be published, as is

desirable in every Christian congregation, at every meeting; and the few observances of the old rule, enjoined by our ecclesiastical statutes, are certainly insufficient for the original purpose. It is to be wished, however, that the members of the Church could be reminded more frequently and habitually of its peculiar Articles. The subject is well worthy of the consideration of those in authority. A few Articles at a time might be read without too much prolonging the service, although the reading of the whole at once might prove tedious and useless. The main object of such a form is, that it be used "as a sign upon the hand, and as frontlets between the eyes," that the Lord's law may "be in our heart;" and it should not be kept merely for reference and appeal. This is the purpose of Scripture, not of the Articles. One substitute, doubtless, has been provided, in commanding the three Creeds to be read publicly; and, accordingly, in order to give these the sanction and authority of our Church, they are inserted in our Articles, although the doctrines contained in them are elsewhere expressed in the Articles themselves\*. Still, this only partially effects the purpose which would be gained by continual promulgation of the Articles.

To return to the primitive Church. It was not

\* In the first five Articles, namely, which are obviously framed on the basis of the Creeds sanctioned afterwards in Art. viii.

only careful to preserve itself, by thus providing against errors of faith, but also by taking cognizance of all immorality or indecorum, which would have endangered the well-being of the community,—endangered it, either by defeating the practical results of the faith on Christians, or by exposing the Church to the scorn and reprehension of those without, whom it was a sacred duty to conciliate by every honest endeavour. In this spirit, Ignatius writes to the Trallians<sup>t</sup>, “Do not let a few unthinking ones among you give occasion to the Gentiles for blaspheming the word and the dispensation of it.” For precedents in the application of St. Paul’s rule, of being “all things to all men,” the apostolic Church, and especially that portion of it which was immediately superintended by the great Gentile apostle, was ample even to detail. The partial record which is left us, abounds in instances; and these must have been but a small portion of the many similar cases, which the first inspired rulers were acquainted with from their own

<sup>t</sup> Chap. viii. In another Epistle of the same Father, (ad Ephes. c. x.) there is a similar passage, and rather an eloquent one, which may, indeed, be applied to the prudence and expediency of good morals, as well as of discreet behaviour. “Give them (unbelievers) the chance of believing through you. Consider yourselves employed by God; your lives, the form of language in which He addressed them. Be mild when they are angry, humble when they are haughty; to their blasphemy oppose prayer unceasing, to their inconsistency, a steadfast adherence to your faith,” &c.



experience. The unobtrusive and cautious demeanour of the Church, in every place, may be pointed out as the visible means whereby Providence sheltered it from the ready spirit of persecution in Jew and Gentile ; and the testimony of Pliny, when that spirit was awakened, fully proves how little the Church had incurred it by any imprudence or indiscreet regulations\*.

But, it was not merely the decorous and appropriate demeanour of Christians, which required the guardian care of their constituted guides ; their morals, even more than their manners, came under the cognizance of ecclesiastical government ; and the exercise of ecclesiastical control here was peculiarly difficult and delicate. It was so on this account : moral offences are, for different reasons, proper objects of punishment to the Christian community considered as a Church, and to the same community considered as a state. With us, accordingly, who have lodged all power in the State, the former view is nearly lost, and punishment is only directed against immorality as a civil crime. But, at the period which we are now considering, each Christian society, bearing all the weight of responsibility on its own shoulders, and not receiving any support from the several civil authorities, felt itself bound to take cognizance of immorality, which, accordingly, became an ecclesiastical offence.

\* Ep. ad Traj.

In many instances the same act would be both a civil and also an ecclesiastical crime ; and this circumstance has had greater influence on the character of the Church's authority than Christians are commonly sensible of. It has occasioned a natural disposition in the Church, from its first patronage by the first Christian emperor, to withdraw its exercise of authority in those matters which come under the cognizance both of Church and State ; until all moral ecclesiastical discipline, as such, has been gradually superseded. Theft, for instance, is a crime against the community considered as a civil body, and also against the same community considered as a Church. Now when Church and State have become not only composed of the same members, but subject to the same executive control, it seems absurd, for the same offenders to be brought twice to the same tribunal, to be punished separately for the same act,—although that act be really a twofold offence. With the early Christians, however, this was quite necessary ; and theft, frauds of every kind, assaults, and all immorality, in short, which was subject to civil penalties, were brought under the cognizance of the Church, and tried without reference to the further punishment which might await the offender from the magistrate. It would be rather beyond the present purpose, to enter into the question of the comparative advantages and disadvantages of Church-discipline as it now stands, and as it must then

have operated. One feature of difference, however, cannot fail to force itself on our observation. Whilst acts of immorality are generally civil as well as ecclesiastical offences ; so that the offender against the Church seldom escapes punishment, (although it may not be the appropriate punishment,) and others are thereby deterred ; still, the same act may be an offence of much greater magnitude in one point of view than in another. The fraudulent dealer, for instance, who commits the least act which the law of the land can reach, and the forger, who is amenable to capital punishment, would not be separated so widely in ecclesiastical views ; although the distinction be clearly just in the former case. But moreover some acts of immorality, some of the most serious, do not fall under the cognizance of the civil magistrate at all ; for instance, adultery, fornication, neglect of filial duty, and the like. When, therefore, the Church ceases to distinguish ecclesiastical from civil offences in moral conduct, some, of no unimportant character escape all penalty and censure ; and the ecclesiastical statutes become obsolete. Hence the Church is forced in these cases to depend on the influence of public feeling, to substitute that punishment, for which, in other cases, it depends on the civil powers. At the period on which we are treating, all this was impossible ; the Church had no resources from without, and thus, although its power was more circumscribed, its jurisdiction was more comprehensive.

It had, as has been formerly pointed out, one inherent right,—that of exclusion, in all its shades and gradations; which, skilfully managed, became no inefficient system of punishment. Were it likely to have been otherwise, indeed, Christ's kingdom would not have been limited to the use of it; nor would the apostles, in illustrating by their example the principles of our spiritual government, have been so cautious not to venture beyond it. By means of this punishment the primitive Church enforced obedience to its forms of faith, its measures of prudent decorum, and its requisites of moral conduct, as far as moral conduct was necessary to constitute an appropriate evidence of sincerity.

Of the character of this punishment, as it appears in the apostolical Church, some remarks were made in an earlier stage of this inquiry. As far as we can trace, the first uninspired Churches were guided strictly by these models. The offender, whether heretic, nonconformist, or evil-liver, was first cautioned, then excluded from certain acts of communion, generally beginning with the Eucharist. If these successive interdictions failed to bring the offender to a sense of his crime, and to the appropriate acknowledgment of that sense, the Church proceeded to complete exclusion; and, in some extreme cases, this was made perpetual<sup>x</sup>. It was

<sup>x</sup> Such, at least, was the rule retained in the Apostolical Constitutions, (lib. ii. c. 41.) It may be doubted, however, whether it is to be interpreted as enjoining perpetual exclusion under all

only when the sentence was that of complete exclusion, that it was made known formally from the Church whose sentence it was, to all others likely to be concerned, that they might be on their guard against receiving the outcast.

The formal testimony of contrition, according to the appointment of the Church, was called penance, or penitence. In the gradual distortions of primitive usages, this assumed a place among the penalties of the Church; but its original character, as the term imports, was that of a formal act of submission and sorrow.

This was always requisite before the offender could be received again into communion; but it was not always at once considered sufficient. Excommunication varied, not only in extent, but in duration; and it was found requisite to keep some offenders under this spiritual degradation for a long period<sup>y</sup>, while others were immediately readmitted on acknowledgment of error.

circumstances—as allowing no possible readmission. This is not necessarily implied, and we know that the general principle was, for the parent Church to receive its prodigal child, whenever it should give sufficient proof of repentance. *Εἰσδέξασθε αὐτοὺς ὡς τὸν υἱὸν τὸν ἀπολωλῶτα, τὸν ἄσωτον, τὸν μετὰ πορνῶν μιᾶσαντα τὴν πατρικὴν οὐσίαν.* So, too, Ignatius, (ad Phil. c. 3.) “As many as repent and return to the unity of the Church, these shall be of God.”

<sup>y</sup> See Bingham, book xviii. c. I. sec. 4. St. Paul’s intercession for the offending member of the Corinthian Church, that the term of his interdiction should be shortened, proves the apostolical establishment of the custom.



All was performed, as far back as we can trace any account of it, with the strictest regard to the solemnity of Christ's earthly tribunal. As the act of penance was formal and solemn, so, too, was the act of absolution, by which the Church restored its member to his former rights.

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## CHAP. VII.

WHAT MEASURES THE FIRST UNINSPIRED CHURCH  
PURSUED FOR SELF-PRESERVATION FROM EXTERNAL  
DANGERS.

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IN the last chapter, I considered the mode of self-preservation adopted by the primitive Church in reference to the dangers it had reason to apprehend from its own members.

But, besides this tendency of the constitution to decay, and become vitiated of itself, there was another class of dangers from without. Heathen philosophy was likely, either to assault Christianity as a rival, or to claim connection with it as a kindred system. In the apostolic age not many learned had been called; and this, evidently, in order to demonstrate that the wisdom of the Gospel was from above. As the divine gifts of wisdom, of knowledge, and of utterance decayed, their loss was supplied by the talents and acquirements of men, whose names will be ever dear to Christians. Nor was it long, before a sufficient host of these was enlisted in the good cause, to form a noble defence of the true faith. The most critical season was the period of transition,—the one to which we have now advanced; a period when the heavenly and

miraculous wisdom was rarely, if ever, vouchsafed, and yet the propagation of the Gospel had scarcely exceeded the original limits of the unlearned and unknown. If we consider the peculiar danger to which the faith was then exposed, we need be thankful, indeed, for the recorded form in which the whole rule of faith was delivered and left. As the new sect spread, philosophers no longer disdained an inquiry into its character, and became candidates for admission. But they came with more than the prejudices of local custom and hereditary manners about them. To a certain extent, their knowledge of heavenly things was supposed to be begun; and they only sought for more light, not such as would make their former view seem darkness and a dream. Many must have turned away from the Christian preachers discontented and disdainful; and theirs was not the worst case. Others would renounce their former knowledge as vain and unfounded, and apply themselves to the minister for instruction; but the applicant was a philosopher; the teacher, perhaps, a plain unlettered man. The former, although he renounced his religious errors, still could not at once renounce the habits of thought, the mouldings of mind, through which they had flowed. He could only learn religious theology, as he had once learned metaphysical theology. Unsuspicious of danger, and assuming among his most useful qualifications, that of being "all things to all men," the early

teacher might blamelessly convey his holy lesson to these, by illustrations and phrases borrowed from their previous stores. In some instances no harm would ensue. In others, we might expect the doctrine to be corrupted by the impure vessels which received it, and the poisonous effect to exhibit itself alike on catechumen and catechist. Out of all this would arise two distinct scenes of danger to religion—distinct in their progress, although originally the same. From the philosophical world which rejected the Christians' offer, all its wisdom would be openly arrayed to crush it. From that portion which embraced it, there would be no less danger in the impurities which it introduced. These would be the authors of heresy and corruption; the former would be sophists and satirists—the last defenders of the ruined temple of idolatry which they could not bring themselves to forsake. In what way heretics were opposed, and how specific antidotes were provided for their errors and seductions, has been already considered. Against the assaults of infidel writers and orators, too, the Church soon found an appropriate weapon of defence. *Apologies*, or formal defences of the faith, were circulated abroad, and even presented to the imperial throne. Of these, the most famous are those of Justin Martyr, addressed to the Antonini. But, many years earlier, Quadratus, Bishop of Athens, and Aristides, had made similar appeals to Hadrian. The province of learning and eloquence



was as yet, however, the weakest point of the Church; and Providence had graciously ordained, that as yet the Church should not so greatly need this kind of support.

It was against the *power* of the unbelieving world that its earliest efforts were required; and for this it was proportionably armed. Every son of the Church was baptized unto a faith, which taught him to aspire to an imitation of Christ, not only in his holiness and spiritual endowments, but in his earthly humiliation and his sufferings. “To me to die is gain,” was echoed down from the apostle to his meanest convert; and elevation to a bishopric was nearly equivalent to an appointment to martyrdom. To read the Epistles of Ignatius, or the monuments of the primitive martyrs generally, without a preparatory knowledge of the tone of feeling, which was that of the Church and of the age—leaves the reader with a doubt of the authenticity of the writings, or of the sincerity of the writers. Even among the learned there are some, not exempt from the error of measuring the results of ancient characters, manners, and feelings, as if those characters, manners, and feelings, were still the same, and our own. Apologies have been made, and attempts ingeniously contrived, to soften down the expressions of the ambitious martyr in his glorious thirst for death. What would Ignatius or Polycarp have said to such a dilution of their character? Surely Cranmer and Ridley understood

it, although in the quiet and gentle scenes around us, Christian heroism may seem romance, and fervid religion, enthusiasm. Martyrdom, the most eager martyrdom, was an act of self-defence in the Church, through its brave and devoted champion. It was the surest, and often the only means of appeasing the awakened fury of persecution; which, being thus spent on the eminent individual, no longer extended itself to the whole body. Amid the jarring elements of passions and prejudices, with which Christ's holy temple was surrounded, the primitive martyrs were the conductors of the fatal spark whenever it flashed forth. They defied, and they received its fury, but the edifice was untouched.

For, it is to be observed, that these early persecutions were not altogether the result of state policy, directed against the growth of a political evil. Had it been so, the Roman power was competent (without the intervention of some signal miracle) to have certainly crushed the new sect. But Christianity was, for reasons often alluded to, unpopular; and persecution was, generally, only a permission to indulge popular licentiousness. Hence it happened, that the sacrifice of one or two conspicuous objects, which would have been insufficient and weak as a political measure for suppressing the sect, was often enough to stay persecution.

Such then was the character of the primitive martyrs. Nor, in contemplating the immense

service rendered by these worthies to the Church, formerly, should we forget that to them we also are indebted, for an important link in the evidence on which we believe. The primitive martyrs told a tale of miracles which they had seen performed in confirmation of that faith, for which they, therefore, died. Could they have been otherwise than sure, who held life as a trifle, when demanded in testimony of the truth of their assertions? Surely their blood still cries from the earth.

It is to be regretted, although we can scarcely wonder at it, that the reverence felt by the Church for benefactors such as these were, should have displayed itself in those various bursts of feeling, which cold-hearted craft, or superstition, afterwards systematized and practised as formal duties. By institutions, not unlike that which should bind us to weep periodically over the grave of one, whose loss drew involuntary tears from our forefathers; how many Churches, in succeeding ages, have bound themselves to pay the same respect to the relics of these holy men, as did their contemporaries and friends in the first transports of gratitude and affection! It has been worse than this. Instead of that enthusiasm of public or private regard, which naturally passed away with the generation to which they belonged, a false and formal piety was substituted. They, who like Paul and Barnabas at Lystra, lived and died to persuade mankind to turn from idolatrous vanities, were mistaken, like their

inspired predecessors, and scarcely regarded as "men of like passions" with their brethren. Martyrs to the truth of that holy record, in which it is written, that "there is one Mediator between God and men; the man Christ Jesus," they were gradually addressed as intercessors with God; and whilst that same record declared, that we are saved by faith and not by works, that "the blood of Christ cleanseth us from all sin," and that God gives not his glory to another; their lives were regarded as abounding in transferable merit; and out of their very relics virtue was supposed to go forth.

Hence too it has arisen, that instead of that simple narrative of their deaths, which we should expect to find, whatever is true concerning them lies buried in an undistinguishable mass of fable and marvels. The most unchristianlike work in the world is a martyrology. It would afford little gratification, therefore, to a searcher after truth, to be presented with a series of these false pictures; and, accordingly, we shall confine our notice of the primitive martyrs to two, who are, perhaps, the most illustrious, and whose history is at the same time best authenticated. These are Ignatius, bishop of Antioch, and Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna. With the latter of these closes the line of apostolical Fathers, and the period within which the present inquiry has been restricted.

*Martyrdom of Ignatius.*

To connect the narrative of the martyrdom of Ignatius, which occurred in what is called by ecclesiastical writers the third general persecution, with the mention of the preceding two, it may be necessary to go back for a while to the period which embraces these. It was in the tenth or eleventh year of Nero's reign, that the first of these fiery trials of God's people commenced, which numbered amongst its victims the apostles Peter and Paul. The interval between this and the second general persecution, which has also been noticed as the era of St. John's banishment, comprises a period of twenty-four years. During this time, the general security did not exempt individuals from persecution and death; it being, as has been observed, one of the apparent motives which actuated these heroic champions of the holy Church, to devote themselves, with a nobler patriotism than that of the Decii, that on them might be spent the wrath and spleen, which, otherwise, the Church at large must have felt. Among those who are recorded in this pious service, and whose deaths may be thus supposed to have prolonged this breathing time of the Church, are the apostles St. Bartholomew and St. Thomas; and of the worthy fellow-labourers of the apostles, Martialis, at Ravenna in Italy, Linus, at Rome, where he was bishop, and Antipas, at Pergamus.



The troubled state of the Roman empire during this period, not a little contributed to the secure progress of Christianity, notwithstanding these occasional evidences of an evil spirit opposed to it. From the death of Nero to the establishment of Vespasian on the imperial throne, the whole world had been kept in continual alarm and suspense, by an uninterrupted contention about the succession. Galba, Otho, and Vitellius, were scarcely allowed, one after the other, to occupy the supremacy, when they were called on to pay the usual price of their lives for it. At length Vespasian secured for himself and for his family a more permanent seat; the tumult of political animosity gradually died away, and Christianity was destined to be one of the chief objects, on which the turbulent and bloody spirits of the age vented those savage feelings, which, nursed amid civil wars, no longer found their former opportunity of indulgence. During the reigns of Vespasian, Titus, and Domitian, the martyrdoms above mentioned occurred. But even these acts of self-devotion, could not long divert the popular fury from the whole body of Christians. A second persecution commenced in Domitian's reign. Under Nerva, his successor, a brief respite was obtained; but with the accession of Trajan a fresh scene of troubles was opened. Early in this reign, Clement, bishop of Rome, met the fate of his predecessors in that perilous station, and was cast into the sea with an anchor

about his neck. The reigning Emperor, according to history, was neither cruel nor supine ; but his government becoming more and more embarrassed with the question concerning the proper management of the Christians, the established system continued to be acted on, until some better method should be devised ; and, accordingly, cruelty and injustice were not less conspicuous in this than in the preceding reigns. If we may credit the Greek Martyrology, besides the distinguished individuals who suffered, on one occasion one thousand one hundred Christian soldiers were banished into Armenia by order of the emperor ; one thousand of whom perished by crucifixion on mount Ararat. The account may be false or exaggerated. Trajan may have been, as he is represented, neither a bloody tyrant, nor an inert monarch ; but, if his character were really thus unspotted, his lot was at least unfortunate for his future fame. Christians cannot forget, that it was during his administration of the affairs of the world, that, separately and successively, the wanton violence of the people was gratified with the blood of five blameless bishops, besides numbers, most of whose names are only recorded in heaven. The rebellion of the Jews in Alexandria, Cyrene, and Cyprus ; the wrongs which roused them to vengeance, and their dreadful acts of retribution—all this, too, contributes to make the picture of his reign such a scene of bloodshed and general

inhumanity, that it is vain to plead his love of humane literature and of literary men, against the force of the powerful association.

It was about A. D. 107. when the emperor, in the full confidence of a prosperous reign of nearly nine years, came to Antioch, to prepare for a war against the Parthians and Armenians. He had already in other parts of the empire indulged the persecuting spirit, which was always ripe to burst forth against the Christians; and his arrival at Antioch was, accordingly, received by the bishop, the good Ignatius, as a certain presage of distress and danger to his flock. He at once adopted the bold remedy, which before had been tried with success by others. He presented himself to Trajan, and behaved in a manner which attracted to himself chiefly, if not wholly, the attention of the monarch; and his sentence was, to be conveyed to Rome, and there to be thrown publicly to wild beasts. The interview between the emperor and the saint, if faithfully related, was well adapted to produce the desired result. It presents a strange contrast between the language of a sovereign of the world, and the simple avowal of one who felt himself beyond his grasp.

Being come into the presence of the emperor, *Trajan* asked him<sup>a</sup>, saying, What a wicked wretch

<sup>a</sup> *Martyrdom of Ignatius*, Archbishop Wake's translation.

art thou, thus to endeavour to transgress our commands, and to persuade others also to do likewise, to their destruction?—*Ignatius* answered, No one ought to call *Theophorus*<sup>b</sup> after such a manner; forasmuch as all wicked spirits are departed far from the servants of God. But if, because I am a trouble to those evil spirits, you call me wicked, with reference to them I confess the charge; for having within me Christ, the heavenly King, I dissolve all the snares of the devils.

*Trajan* replied, And who is *Theophorus*?—*Ignatius*. He who has Christ in his breast.—*Trajan*. And do not we then seem to thee to have the gods within us, who fight for us against our enemies?—*Ignatius*. You err, in that you call the evil spirits of the heathens, gods. For there is but one God, who made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that are in them; and one Jesus Christ, his only-begotten Son, whose kingdom may I enjoy.

*Trajan*. His kingdom, you say, who was crucified under Pontius Pilate?—*Ignatius*. His, who crucified my sin with the inventor of it; and has put all the deceit and malice of the devil under the feet of those who carry him in their heart.—*Trajan*. Dost thou then carry Him who was crucified within thee?—*Ignatius*. I do; for it is written, *I will dwell in them, and walk in them.*—Then *Trajan* pronounced

<sup>b</sup> This name was doubtless adopted in allusion to the Christian doctrine, that we are “the temple of the Holy Ghost, who dwelleth in us.”

this sentence against him. Forasmuch as Ignatius has confessed, that he carries about within himself Him that was crucified, we command that he be carried, bound by soldiers, to the great Rome, there to be thrown to the beasts, for the entertainment of the people.

When the holy martyr heard this sentence, he cried out with joy, "I thank thee, O Lord, that thou hast vouchsafed to honour me with a perfect love towards thee; and hast made me to be put into iron bonds with thy apostle Paul."

It was in his journey to Rome, that the six Epistles were written, which comprise his genuine remains. Of that addressed to the Romans, expressing an anxiety to prevent any attempt to rescue, or even to intercede for him, some mention has been already made. On the same topic he dwells in his other Epistles.

It was more peculiarly, however, for his own charge at Antioch, that he had courted death; and from his *Epistle to the Philadelphians*, written from Troas, he must have had the consolation of knowing that he had not devoted himself in vain. The persecution had, by this time, begun to abate; although its mitigation may, perhaps, have been owing to the concurrence of another cause, which deserves notice<sup>c</sup>.

The governor of Bithynia at this period was

<sup>c</sup> Euseb. Hist. lib. iii. c. 33.



Pliny, the elegant author of the Letters, which are in the hands of every scholar. That he was no ordinary favourite and friend of the emperor, those Letters testify ; and the use which he appears to have made of this influence, is not the least brilliant part of his character. Finding himself daily more and more embarrassed by complaints against the Christians, he investigated their case, and sent the statement to the emperor, with a request for further instruction for his conduct. It was no common merit in that age, to have so far opposed the current of popular feeling, as to have given the question a patient and candid, although an imperfect investigation ; and to have represented it so to the monarch, as to remove from his mind its worst suspicions. Concerning his *Letter* it may be sufficient to remark, that it bore evidence to the moral and orderly behaviour of the persecuted Christians ; which was the point *then* most important, because it, doubtless, mainly contributed to check the permission to persecute. It has further placed on a heathen record the fact, that in that early period of the Church, one of its prominent practices, was the worship of Christ as God<sup>d</sup>.

<sup>d</sup> What the full information was which Pliny obtained respecting the Christian rites, especially from the two deaconesses whom he examined by torture, we do not know. His account is only the confession of certain apostates, in which, nevertheless, there is an obvious agreement with the truth. " They declared," he writes, " that this was the amount of their

*Martyrdom of Polycarp.*

From the death of Ignatius to that of the last surviving apostolic Father, Polycarp, an interval of about sixty years intervenes; during which the Church was still perpetually called on to exert all its efforts for self-preservation. Its dangers from within were kept up by the craft or enthusiasm of such men as Basilides, Valentinius, and Marcion<sup>e</sup>, together with other sectarians, if possible, more impious and absurd—Ophitæ, Cainitæ, Sethiani. The wit and learning of the avowed heathens were more vigorously directed against the encroaching influence of a system, the establishment of which was the overthrow of what then seemed the most sublime and important portion of philosophy<sup>f</sup>. The

guilt, or their error;—that on a stated day they used to meet before daylight, and address to Christ, as God, a form of words broken into alternate portions; that their sacrament was nothing to bind them to any deed of wickedness, but to preserve them from committing theft, robbery, falsehood, dishonest practices; that, when it was all over, they used to disperse, and again meet at a meal, in which there was nothing remarkable or blameworthy.” This meal was, of course, the Feast of Love. For Pliny’s statement and Trajan’s reply, see *Plin. Ep.* x. 97, 98.

<sup>e</sup> Montanus and his followers were not yet marked as heretics, although they were, before the death of Polycarp, sowing the seeds of error.

<sup>f</sup> It is quite necessary, in order to understand Aristotle’s view of *σοφία* in his *Ethics*, to connect it with his religious theory—that the Deity, namely, pervaded the universe, and was the universe.

Christians were called on to write answers to accusations, and to refute arguments. Nor was the sword of persecution less bloody than heretofore. Trajan's Letter to Pliny, which, doubtless, established the principle by which the accusations against Christians were treated during the remainder of his reign, still gave considerable latitude to any provincial governor, who was either himself cruel, or disposed to indulge the malice and caprice of the provincials. Even at Rome, and shortly after the emperor's rule was laid down, Onesimus, St. Paul's disciple, is said to have been stoned <sup>s</sup>.

Whatever moderation Trajan, however, may have used during the latter part of his reign, it was no longer observed on the accession of Hadrian. Persecution, severe and general, was again suffered to go on without control or mercy. At Rome, especially, it was no longer directed against the most eminent, but numbers were wantonly murdered, and still more were driven to seek shelter in crypts and caves. Their bishop, Evaristus, was among the first martyrs. A letter from Serenius Grani-anus<sup>b</sup> to the emperor, in behalf of the defenceless

<sup>s</sup> The martyrologies make him bishop of Antioch. See Cave.

<sup>b</sup> He was proconsul of Asia, and his Letter represents the Christian persecutions as an unjustifiable indulgence of popular licentiousness. As the Emperor's rescript was addressed to Minucius Fundanus, the Christians of that province must soon have lost the protection of one, who deserves to be remembered as the first heathen governor who recommended the toleration of

Christians, procured at length an order for mitigating the severity of the proceedings. Still, even the intervals between the avowed and authorized persecutions abound with occasional acts, which, under existing prejudices, could not fail to be perpetually committed. Before Hadrian's reign was closed, Alexander, another bishop of Rome, suffered; and the deaths of Getulius, Amantius Cerealis, and others of less note, occurred nearly within the last year of it. The Antonini succeeded, and from that period to the fifth great persecution which preceded the death of Polycarp, two more bishops of Rome, Telesphorus and Hyginus, besides Justin Martyr, and many of inferior note, kept up the succession of martyrs.

Polycarp had been permitted to arrive at extreme old age, notwithstanding his known zeal and activity as bishop of Smyrna. He was born during the reign of Nero, and is said to have enjoyed the instruction and friendship of several of the apostles, of St. Paul especially, and St. John. No testimony to his good use of these great advantages, can add weight to that which has been left on record by the last-mentioned apostle in the book of Revelations. "Unto the angel of the Church of Smyrna write; These things saith the first and the last, which was dead and is alive. I know thy works, and

Christianity, as a right which could not justly be denied to Christian subjects. See Euseb. Hist. lib. iv. c. 8. and 9.

tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich,) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan. Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer; behold the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days; be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life<sup>1</sup>.”

The veneration felt by the whole Christian world, for one whose character and prophetic history had been thus made sacred by an apostle's pen, and who was the last of those who had conversed with the apostles themselves, may sufficiently account for his martyrdom. He was called for by the acclamations of a mob, and sacrificed to their inhuman wantonness. Among the relics of ecclesiastical antiquity, few are more worthy of being generally known than the *Epistle of the Church of Smyrna*, which details, simply and sincerely, all the incidents of his fate. Scaliger has said of it<sup>k</sup>, that he never met with any thing in ecclesiastical history which so much affected him, and that after reading it he was no longer himself. A literal translation of the main parts of this Epistle then will, perhaps, be more generally acceptable than any other narrative of the martyrdom of the last apostolical Father. Of his own writings we have

<sup>1</sup> Chap. ii. 8—10.

<sup>k</sup> In Animadvers. Eusebian. num. 2183.



only one Epistle, not unworthy of his fame. It is addressed to the Philippians, and is preserved partly in the original Greek, and partly in an ancient Latin translation. Some of it is entirely lost.

*Extract from the Epistle of the Church of Smyrna on the Martyrdom of Polycarp*<sup>1</sup>.

“ Polycarp, when he first heard that he was called for, was not at all concerned at it, but resolved to tarry in the city. Nevertheless, he was at the last persuaded, at the desire of many, to go out of it. He departed, therefore, into a little village not far distant from the city, and there tarried with a few about him; doing nothing, night nor day, but praying for all men, and for the Churches which were in all the world, according to his usual custom. And as he was praying, he saw a vision<sup>m</sup> three days before he was taken; and, behold, the pillow under his head seemed to him on fire. Whereupon, turning to those who were with him, he said prophetically, that he should be burnt alive.

“ Now when those who were to take him drew

<sup>1</sup> The Epistle is addressed “ From the Church of God which is at Smyrna to the Church of God which is at Philadelphia, and to all other assemblies of the holy catholic Church, in every place.” The translation is Archbishop Wake’s.

<sup>m</sup> Ἐν ὀπτασίᾳ γέγονε. Eusebius represents it as a dream.

near, he departed into another village ; and immediately they who sought him came thither. And when they found him not, they seized upon two young men that were there ; one of which, being tormented, confessed. For it was impossible he should be concealed, forasmuch as they who betrayed him were his own domestics. So the officer, who is also called *Cleronomus*, (Herod by name,) hastened to bring him into the lists ; that so Polycarp might receive his proper portion, being made partaker of Christ, and they that betrayed him, undergo the punishment of Judas.

“ The serjeants, therefore, and horsemen, taking the young lad along with them, departed about supper-time, (being Friday,) with their usual arms, as it were against a thief or a robber. And being come to the place where he was, about the close of the evening, they found him lying down in a little upper room, from whence he could easily have escaped into another place, but he would not, saying, ‘ The will of the Lord be done.’

“ Wherefore, when he heard that they had come to the house, he went down and spake to them. And as they that were present wondered at his age and constancy, some of them began to say, ‘ Was there need of all this care to take such an old man ?’ Then presently he ordered, that the same hour there should be somewhat got ready for them, that they might eat and drink their fill ; desiring them withal, that they would give him one hour’s liberty the

while to pray without disturbance. And when they had permitted him, he stood praying, being full of the grace of God, so that he ceased not for two whole hours, to the admiration of all that heard him; insomuch that many of the soldiers began to repent that they were come out against so godly an old man.

“As soon as he had done his prayer—in which he remembered all men, whether little or great, honourable or obscure, that had at any time been acquainted with him; and, with them, the whole catholic Church over all the world—the time being come that he was to depart, the guards set him upon an ass, and so brought him into the city, being the day of the great Sabbath. And Herod, the chief officer, with his father Nicetas, met him in a chariot. And having taken him up to them, and set him in the chariot, they began to persuade him, saying, ‘What harm is there in it, to say, Lord Cæsar, and sacrifice, (with the rest that is usual on such occasions,) and so be safe?’ But Polycarp, at first, answered them not: whereupon they continuing to urge him, he said, ‘I shall not do what you persuade me to.’ So being out of all hope of prevailing with him, they began first to rail at him, and then, with violence, threw him out of the chariot, insomuch that he hurt his thigh with the fall. But he, not turning back, went on readily with all diligence, as if he had received no harm at all; and so was brought to the lists, where

there was so great a tumult, that nobody could be heard.

“ As he was going into the lists, there came a voice from heaven to him, ‘ Be strong, Polycarp, and quit thyself like a man.’ Now no one saw who it was that spake to him ; but for the voice, many of our brethren, who were present, heard it. And as he was brought in, there was a great disturbance when they heard how that Polycarp was taken. And when he came near, the proconsul asked him, ‘ Whether he was Polycarp ;’ who confessing that he was, he persuaded him to deny the faith, saying, ‘ Reverence thy old age ;’ with many other things of the like nature, as their custom is ; concluding thus, ‘ Swear by Cæsar’s fortune. Repent, and say, Take away the wicked.’ Then Polycarp, looking with a stern countenance upon the whole multitude of wicked Gentiles, that was gathered together in the lists ; and shaking his hand at them, looked up to heaven, and groaning, said, ‘ Take away the wicked.’ But the proconsuls insisting and saying, ‘ Swear ; and I set thee at liberty : reproach Christ.’ Polycarp replied, ‘ Eighty and six years have I now served Christ, and He has never done me the least wrong ; how then can I blaspheme my King and my Saviour.’

“ And when the proconsul nevertheless still insisted, saying, ‘ Swear by the genius of Cæsar,’ he answered, ‘ Seeing thou art so vainly urgent with me that I should swear, as thou callest it, by the

genius of Cæsar, seeming as if thou didst not know what I am ; hear me freely professing to thee, that I am a Christian. But if thou farther desirest an account of what Christianity is, appoint a day, and thou shalt hear it.' The proconsul replied, 'Persuade the people.' Polycarp answered, 'To thee have I offered to give a reason of my faith : for so are we taught to pay all due honour, (such only excepted, as would be hurtful to ourselves,) to the powers and authority which are ordained of God. But for the people, I esteem them not worthy, that I should give any account of my faith to them.'

"The proconsul continued, and said unto him, 'I have wild beasts ready ; to those I will cast thee, except thou repent.' He answered, 'Call for them then ; for we Christians are fixed in our minds, not to change from good to evil. But for me it will be good, to be changed from evil to good.' The proconsul added, 'Seeing thou despisest the wild beasts, I will cause thee to be devoured by fire, unless thou shalt repent.' Polycarp answered, 'Thou threatenest me with fire which burns for an hour, and so is extinguished ; but knowest not the fire of the future judgment, and of that eternal punishment which is reserved for the ungodly. But why tarriest thou ? Bring forth what thou wilt.'

"Having said this, and many other things of the like nature, he was filled with confidence and joy, insomuch that his very countenance was full



of grace ; so that he did not only not let it fall with confusion at what was spoken to him ; but on the contrary, the proconsul was struck with astonishment, and sent his crier into the middle of the lists, to proclaim three several times, ‘ Polycarp has confessed himself to be a Christian.’ Which being done by the crier, the whole multitude, both of the Gentiles and of the Jews which dwelt at Smyrna, being full of fury, cried out with a loud voice, ‘ This is the doctor of Asia<sup>n</sup>, the father of Christians, and the overthrower of our gods ; he that has taught so many not to sacrifice, nor pay any worship to the gods.’ And saying this, they cried out, and desired Philip the Asiarch<sup>o</sup>, that he would let loose a lion against Polycarp. But Philip replied, that it was not lawful for him to do so, because that kind of spectacle was already over. Then it pleased them to cry out with one consent, that Polycarp should be burnt alive. For so it was necessary for the vision to be fulfilled, which was made manifest unto him by his pillow, when, seeing it on fire as he was praying, he turned about, and said prophetically to the

<sup>n</sup> The reading of the Greek manuscript is *ὁ τῆς ἀστυίας διδάσκαλος*, but Eusebius, Rufinus, and the old Latin translator, read *Ἀσίας*, which has been accordingly adopted by Archbishop Wake.

<sup>o</sup> Not the Roman governor, but one who was elected annually by the provincials from themselves, to preside over the public spectacles, and other solemnities. See Usher, *in loco*.

faithful that were with him, 'I must be burnt alive.'

"This, therefore, was done with greater speed than it was spoke; the whole multitude instantly gathering together wood and fagots, out of the shops and baths; the Jews especially, according to their custom, with all readiness assisting them in it. When the fuel was ready, Polycarp, laying aside all his upper garments, and undoing his girdle, tried also to pull off his clothes underneath, which aforetime he was not wont to do; forasmuch, as always every one of the Christians that was about him, contended who should soonest touch his flesh. For he was truly adorned by his good conversation with all kind of piety, even before his martyrdom. This being done, they presently put about him such things as were necessary to prepare the fire. But when they would have also nailed him to the stake, he said, 'Let me alone as I am: for He who has given me strength to endure the fire, will also enable me, without your securing me by nails, to stand without moving in the pile.'

"Wherefore they did not nail him, but only tied him to it. But he, having put his hands behind him, and being bound as a ram chosen out of a great flock for an offering, and prepared to be a burnt-sacrifice acceptable unto God, looked up to heaven, and said, 'O Lord God Almighty, the Father of thy well-beloved and blessed Son, Jesus

Christ, by whom we have received the knowledge of thee ; the God of angels and powers, and of every creature, and especially of the whole race of just men, who live in thy presence ! I give thee hearty thanks, that thou hast vouchsafed to bring me to this day, and to this hour ; that I should have a part in the number of thy martyrs, in the cup of thy Christ, to the resurrection of eternal life, both of soul and body, in the incorruption of the Holy Ghost. Among which may I be accepted this day before thee, as a fat and acceptable sacrifice ; as thou the true God, with whom is no falsehood, hast both before ordained, and manifested unto me, and also hast now fulfilled it. For this, and for all things else, I praise thee, I bless thee, I glorify thee, by the eternal and heavenly High Priest, Jesus Christ, thy beloved Son ; with whom, to thee, and the Holy Ghost, be glory, both now and to all succeeding ages.' Amen.

“ He had no sooner pronounced aloud *Amen*, and finished his prayer, but they who were appointed to be his executioners lighted the fire. And when the flame began to blaze to a very great height ; behold, a wonderful miracle appeared<sup>p</sup>, to

<sup>p</sup> From the narrative itself, there is good reason to think, that the friends of the martyr mistook for a miracle what was the effect of accident. The same may be observed of the voice which encouraged him. For the proper estimate of accounts of miracles given by uninspired writers, see p. 27, of this volume.

us who had the happiness to see it, and who were reserved by heaven, to report to others what had happened. For the flame, making a kind of arch, like the sail of a ship filled with the wind, encompassed, as in a circle, the body of the holy martyr; who stood in the midst of it, not as if his flesh were burnt, but as bread that is baked, or as gold or silver glowing in the furnace. Moreover, so sweet a smell came from it, as if frankincense, or some rich spices, had been smoking there.

“ At length, when those wicked men saw that his body could not be consumed by the fire, they commanded the executioner to go near to him, and stick his dagger in him; which being accordingly done, there came forth so great a quantity of blood<sup>4</sup>, as even extinguished the fire, and raised an admiration in all the people, to consider what a difference there was between the infidels and the elect; one of which this great martyr, Polycarp, most certainly was; being in our times a truly apostolical and prophetic teacher, and bishop of the catholic Church which is at Smyrna. For every word that went out of his mouth, either has

<sup>4</sup> Ἐξῆλθε περιστιγὰ καὶ πλῆθος αἵματος. The translator has omitted the word *περιστιγὰ*, which, indeed, can hardly be the genuine reading; for a circumstance so remarkable must have been noticed by Eusebius and Rufinus. Perhaps we should read *ἐξῆλθε περὶ στίγμα καὶ \* \* \* πλῆθος αἵματος*.

been already fulfilled, or, in its due time, will be accomplished.

“ But when the emulous, and envious, and wicked adversary of the race of the just, saw the greatness of his martyrdom ; and considered how irreprehensible his conversation had been from the beginning, and how he was now crowned with the crown of immortality, having without all controversy received his reward ; he took all possible care, that not the least \* remainder of his body should be taken away by us, although many desired to do it, and to be made partakers of his holy flesh. And to that end, he suggested it to Nicetas, the father of Herod, and brother of Alcé, to go to the governor, and hinder him from giving us his body to be buried. ‘ Lest, (says he,) forsaking Him that was crucified, they should begin to worship this Polycarp.’ And this he said at the suggestion and instance of the Jews ; who also watched us, that we should not take him out of the fire : not considering, that neither is it possible for us ever to forsake Christ, who suffered for the salvation of all such as shall be saved throughout the whole world, *the righteous for the ungodly* ; nor worship any other besides him. For him, indeed, as being the Son of God, we do adore : but for the martyrs, we worthily love them, as the disciples and followers of our Lord : and upon the account of their exceeding great affection towards their Master, and their



King. Of whom may we also be made companions and fellow-disciples<sup>r</sup>."

*Conclusion.*

It is impossible to look back on the scenes which we have been reviewing,—the efforts of the primitive Church, to preserve the sacred record of the Gospel; to perpetuate its evidence; to dispense its truths; to convey its promised grace; and, lastly, to preserve itself as the temple of divine manifestation, and the holy of holies, where the blessed gift has been deposited; it is impossible to look back on all this, without acknowledging the continued fulfilment of the Saviour's promise, that he would be with his Church always, even unto the end of the world<sup>s</sup>.

For, together with the efforts of man, the silent measures of cooperating Providence have borne a part too important and too manifest to escape notice. They are recognized in all those collateral events, which were beyond the forethought and control of men, in the seasonable removal of the

<sup>r</sup> This, then, is the indignant avowal of those very persons, whose authority is insisted on for the primitive custom of worshipping relics! Augustin has nearly the same sentiment, *Non sit nobis Religio cultus hominum mortuorum; quia si piè vixerunt, non sic habentur, ut tales quærant honores; sed Illum a nobis coli volunt, quo illuminante, lætantur, meriti sui nos esse consortes. Honorandi ergo sunt propter imitationem, non adorandi propter Religionem. Lib. de vera Relig. sect. 109.*

<sup>s</sup> Matt. xxviii. 20.

sceptre from Judah ; in the universal empire, permitted for a time to the Romans ; and in the very struggles for the imperial dignity, which occurred during the first era of the Gospel. These then have been pointed out in the progress of this inquiry, as the main features of that portion of the mighty work, on which the finger of God is apparent ; while others more minute, but not less certainly discernible, have continually presented themselves.

Still more will the presence of Christ with his Church be apparent, as we trace its onward course, through the long lapse of time which separates the first age from our own. In each successive period, we shall see the Church, sometimes languid and feeble in its efforts, sometimes awakened and refreshed like a giant from sleep. We shall see, too, the successive appointments of Providence, operating to aid the efforts of men in accomplishing the great scheme of the Gospel. As the distance has increased between the events recorded in the New Testament, and the several generations of those whose best hopes rest on the faithfulness of the record, a new art has been given to the world, and printing has furnished additional and ample security against all danger of corruption. This provision then for checking the injurious effect of time on the authenticity of a record, has been beautifully commensurate with the need. Science, art, commerce, all the shiftings of scene which have occurred in the

world, have proved, often unexpectedly, the means of fostering or extending religion. Other instruments, more important than this, may be even now in action, in scenes and measures which we are imperfectly surveying; or may be reserved for a future age.

Meanwhile, did the primitive Church, has any Church, arrived at all that spiritual eminence on earth, for which the Gospel seems to have designed us? There are various scruples, by which men are commonly deterred from candidly meeting this question. Some look back with blind admiration on the past; others regard all improvement, not yet made, as chimerical, and not contemplated in the Gospel scheme. That the provisions made—not indeed for the salvation of Christians—but for the perfection of the Christian body, the Church, have been hitherto gradual and progressive, there can be no denying; and if so, the primitive Church itself is not to be regarded as the exact counterpart of that holy pattern, which God in his last Revelation has given us, for this mysterious workmanship,—his Church. The purest Church will hardly abide the test of such an admeasurement. It may, perhaps, be called chimerical, to look for a more perfect realization of those glorious visions, which the Holy Spirit has left with us; but if it be fanciful, let us at least pause, and candidly confess in what the illusion consists. It is, to dwell on a scene, where every man shall be a Chris-

tian, and every Christian shall live, as if the Son of God were his daily companion, at home in his family, abroad in his intercourse with the world. It is, to hope for a period, when that awful feeling which deterred the Israelitish worshipper from profaning the holy vessels of the temple, and from polluting its altar, shall be even more strongly felt by the Christian in his use of himself, that vessel made unto honour, in the living temple of the Holy Ghost; when every member of Christ's Church, feeling that he belongs to a society with which God is mysteriously united, shall shudder to do aught that may be sacrilege therein. And, if all this be indeed fanciful and unfounded, be it excused for the sake of Him, who set no boundary to our hopes of improvement, bidding us purify ourselves even as He is pure; be perfect, even as our Father who is in heaven is perfect.

But why should this state of things be unattainable? Is it because the Christian is already under the best and most advantageous circumstances for profiting by that divine grace, through which alone, all acknowledge, that such an event, if practicable, must be accomplished? Or, is it from a view of the corruption of human nature,—the strength of evil in man? One of these suppositions must be the ground of our doubt. The latter may be more fully stated thus. The natural corruption of human nature, it may be said, has all along prevented a more effectual and perfect operation of the Holy Spirit; and as

this corruption must exist to the end of time, no future circumstances, however advantageous to the use of God's grace, ought to be supposed capable of advancing us much nearer to this perfection, inasmuch as they cannot remove that corruption. Now this view does really involve a denial of the sufficiency of divine grace to accomplish the very object for which it was given: it implies a distrust in those promises and assurances, which, in one sense, are extended to all Christians, "My grace is sufficient for thee," "My strength is made perfect in weakness," "With man this is impossible, but not with God, for with God all things are possible," "Without me ye can do nothing," but "I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world," "I in you, and you in me." If therefore we believe the assurances of God, we cannot, consistently, maintain that the strength of evil in man is so great, that under no circumstances the promised help of God will completely counteract and overpower it. We cannot, as Christians, doubt that this *is* practicable; although we may differ about the circumstances which are likely to be requisite for rendering it so.

Taking then the other view as the ground of our doubts, we must suppose, that our present condition admits of no such improvement, as would make it much more easy for us to obey God. On a survey of all the existing institutions of the Christian world—of the constitution of every Church, and of the means it provides for dispersing the seed,



and bringing to maturity the fruit, of true religion—can it be said that all these are, in any instance, so perfect, as to justify this despair?

If so, we must be content to explain away, as best we may, the brilliant pictures of prophecy. We must be content to do more—to confess that Christ has put into our hands an instrument unsuited to our powers; that his gift of the “shield of faith” and the “sword of the Spirit,” is like the weapons of a giant presented to a warrior of ordinary stature; and that an angel only could sustain the whole armour of God, or wield with effect the heavenly weapon. Surely this is a view of the Christian scheme not easily to be adopted.

It is indeed a peculiarity of the Gospel, that, unlike a system of philosophy, or the dream of a theorist, it proffers the means of attaining perfection, instead of dwelling on Utopian plans, for unassisted nature to aim at realizing. The philosopher and the theorist give a map of Elysium, to those who are separated from it by an insuperable barrier; the Gospel promises us that help which shall enable us to surmount the barrier,—to “pass over the great gulph<sup>s</sup>.” Precise description of the scene is no part of its office. It is *THE WAY*; let us pursue it in faith, not doubting the goodness of the promised land to which it is said to lead.

<sup>s</sup> Luke xvi. 26.

## APPENDIX.



## APPENDIX.

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*Vol. I. page 10. [A.]*

SO in the ancient Egyptian religion the supreme Being was probably represented by the emblem of a serpent coiled into a circle, with the head of a hawk, expressing eternity and omniscience<sup>a</sup>. In time the symbol became in itself an object of reverence, whilst the meaning was lost. The same process is perpetually going on even in the case of *words*; to which we are prone to attach a regard so

<sup>a</sup> Euseb. de Præp. Evang. lib. i. c. 10. where a fragment of Philo Biblius's translation of Sanchoniathon is given. The emblem is described as very like the Greek Θ.

The prevalence of serpent-worship all through the idolatrous world is very remarkable. In this fragment of Sanchoniathon, preserved by Eusebius, it is attributed to the Phœnicians as well as to the Egyptians.

Among the Greeks and Romans, it was an indispensable part of the representation of Æsculapius, (see Livii Epitome, lib. ii. and Ovidii Metamorph. lib. xv. fab. 50.) We recognize it in Babylon, in the story of Bel and the Dragon; and on modern authorities its existence has been asserted in Muscovy; (Sigismundi's History cited in Dr. Nichol's conference with a Theist, page 200.) in the East Indies, and among the savage tribes of Africa. See Millar's History of the Propagation of Christianity, vol. i. p. 221.

strong, as in time to divert the attention from their original application and character. There are some such in every language, so sanctified by use, that many minds would revolt at substituting any other arbitrary expressions for the ideas which they are supposed to convey, as much as at renouncing the ideas themselves. How far more likely this was to take place, when the expression was symbolical or allegorical, is obvious. Nothing is more likely, than that the creation of the world by the supreme Being and his *Word*, was originally signified by the fable of Cneph, sending forth an egg from his mouth, which produced the universe<sup>b</sup>. Yet this allegorical record only ministered afterwards to superstition.

The case of the Jews, and the brazen serpent which Hezekiah broke, is familiar to all. See 2 Kings xviii. 4. “And he called it Nehushtan,” i. e. a thing of brass.

*Vol. I. page 22. [B.]*

The encroachment of idolatry on the true faith, cannot be supposed to have been made every where without a struggle. That such actually was the case in Egypt, may be inferred from a fragment which has been preserved of its earlier history.

<sup>b</sup> Præpar. Evang. lib. i. c. 10. and lib. iii. c. 2. Cudworth, Syst. Intell. cap. 4. sect. 18. p. 526. Mosheim's edition.



The Egyptians of Thebais, at one period, claimed exemption from the tribute paid for the support of the sacred animals in Lower Egypt, on the ground of their worshipping *Cneph*, the name by which the supreme Being appears to have been designated, according to the fable before alluded to. (See Plutarch de Iside et Osir. referred to by Bishop Cumberland in his *Sanchoniatho*, p. 13.) Cudworth, in his *Intellectual System*, has made a similar application of the passage. (See Mosheim's edition, vol. i. p. 527. and p. 730.) His learned editor has indeed raised an objection, on the ground that the Egyptians understood by the term *Cneph*, and by the symbol to which it was applied, *The Creative Power*, and that this was no characteristic with them of the supreme Being. But this fact rather supports Cudworth's view. For, does it not seem unaccountable, that the one part of the Egyptian nation should have excluded from their religion all the gods of the other, *because their God was the Creative Power*? Does it not make the very point at issue between them, and characterize the period, when the Egyptians of Thebais had not yet, like the rest of their countrymen, and like all the heathen, *distinguished* the Creator from the supreme Being, and classed him among deified men, and the symbols of idolatry? Of course their subsequent corruption would necessarily occasion the term *Cneph* to express no more than it expressed amongst the other Egyptians; but some different

character it certainly must have had at the time when they were contending, that their tribute was due to the exclusive service of him so denominated, and denying the intercommunity of deities adopted elsewhere.

*Vol. I. page 30. [C.]*

Vide Eusebii Præparat. Evangel. lib. ii. c. 2. and again, c. 6. where he alludes to this method of defence being set up by the philosophical champions of orthodoxy. Τοιαύτα ἦν τὰ τῆς παλαιᾶς θεολογίας, ἣν μεταβάλλοντες νεοὶ τίνες, χθὲς καὶ πρῶην ἐπιφύεντες, λογικώτερον τε φιλοσοφεῖν αὐχοῦντες, τὴν δὲ φυσικώτεραν τῆς περὶ Θεὸν ἱστορίας δόξαν ἀρνήσαντο, σεμνότερας εὐρεσιολογίας τοῖς μυθοῖς προσεπινοήσαντες. Tertullian makes a similar allusion in his tract against Marcion, (lib. i. c. 13.). *Ipsa quoque vulgaris superstitio communis Idololatriæ, cum in simulacris de nominibus et fabulis veterum mortuorum pudet, ad interpretationem naturalem refugit, et dedecus suum ingenio obumbrat, figurans Jovem in substantiam fervidam, et Junonem in aerem, &c.* The subject is discussed at large by Warburton in the Divine Legation, book iii. §. 6.

What was thus done with some reason by the heathen, was afterwards perversely imitated by the Christian Fathers, who applied to the defence of the Bible, the principles of criticism on which the Pagan mythology had been upheld. These were again imitated by the mystics of the twelfth cen-

tury, who even proceeded to found their system of interpretation on Scripture itself, and quoted for this end, “*littera occidit, spiritus vivificat* ;” as if the literal and primary sense of Scripture was pronounced worse than useless. See Marsh’s *Divinity Lectures*, Lect. xvii.

*Vol. I. page 49. [D.]*

In contemplating the Jewish dispensation, it is very important to distinguish between those parts which seem to have been designed for *immediate* revelation, or other immediate purposes, and those which could only have served indirectly to qualify the Jews for a future revelation, and a finished dispensation. The principle may be extended even to their canon of Scripture. For, not to mention such obscure prophecies, as could only be understood by a knowledge of the event after it had taken place ; there is a great portion of the Old Testament Scriptures, which seem to have had no further use and design, than to educate the people at large for Gospel instruction. The Jews had no literature but Scripture ; and God was not only their supreme Governor, but their national Preceptor. By means of those parts of the Proverbs, the Psalms, and Prophets, which, conveying no revelation, often no religious truth, are merely valuable for the acute judgment, or the poetic imagination displayed,—by means of these, the

national taste and mode of thinking received such a moulding as was best suited for the teaching of the Messiah when he came. From these, accordingly, he borrows his images and illustrations, and to these perpetually alludes in order to make himself understood.

Of all the Jewish Scriptures so circumstanced, no one portion is so remarkable as the Song of Solomon. It appears to contain no revelation,—no religious instruction. It suggests to us no character but that of a royal epithalamium. But if we wish to discover a reason why the Spirit of God should have sanctioned the work, let us refer to the narrative of Christ's discourses and parables ; and we shall find them abounding with the images which it furnishes—the bride—the bridegroom—the wedding feast—the wedding garment—the fidelity of the mysterious spouse, and the like. Evidently he had found in this work a train of images which had taken possession of the popular fancy from their beauty, and had also become sanctified by their place in the Scriptures. This and the like portions of holy writ had given just such a degree of cultivation to the meanest class, as enabled them to comprehend readily his instructions, on topics which require the learner to have some such previous cultivation of mind. The fishermen of Galilee, who might have been too dull and unimaginative, to enter into his various lively forms of instruction, and needful illustrations of the

peculiar truths of Christianity, had they been accustomed to no Scripture but such as drily detailed God's laws and judgments, found his teaching, in consequence of this preparation, intelligible and agreeable. Of all the popular Scriptures, none probably were more so, than the Psalms of David; and we may observe, accordingly, that out of these come a considerable part of the quotations which he made to them.

*Vol. I. page 79. [E.]*

Lightfoot (see *Horæ Hebraicæ* in Joann. iv. 25.) supposes the Samaritans to have made use of the prophetical books of the Jews, only so far as they confirmed the predictions of the Pentateuch; and in this way accounts for the woman of Samaria's adoption of the Jewish phrase, in calling the Redeemer "the Messiah." This view derives support from a passage in Justin Martyr, quoted by Beausobre. (*Remaiques*, t. i. p. 152.) Ἰουδαῖοι τε καὶ Σαμαρεῖς, ἔχοντες τὸν παρὰ Θεοῦ λόγον, διὰ τῶν προφῆτῶν παραδόθεντα αὐτοῖς, κ. τ. λ. And as Justin was himself of Sychem, his authority on this point is so much the greater. (See Bp. Blomfield's note on his *Dissertation upon the Traditional Knowledge of a Promised Redeemer*, p. 172. where the views of Lightfoot, Beausobre, Basnage, and others, are noticed.) But after all, why should not the Samaritan woman have accommodated her language to the stranger



whom she was addressing, and have called him, whom she expected, by the name which that stranger was known to use? As to Justin's words, διὰ τῶν προφητῶν, they might have been intended to apply to Moses, only as one of the prophets, the class being put for the individual belonging to it. Thus we should still speak of a quotation from *the Prophets*, although it were only from one prophet's writings. And besides, the term prophet, it is well known, is applicable to all those to whom "God at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers;" and might, without any forced interpretation, be here understood to mean those who received, and passed on, the several intimations of a Saviour from Adam unto Moses.

The Samaritan poems, of which mention is made in the following note, favour the opinion, that the Samaritans absolutely rejected all the Scriptures but the Pentateuch.

*Vol. I. page 84. [F.]*

The account of theological tenets of the Samaritans must be received with considerable caution, since they are known to us almost entirely through their adversaries the Jews. Attempts have indeed been made to procure a fairer and more unexceptionable statement from an examination of some of the scanty specimens of their literature which are still extant.

Professor Gesenius, with this view, published at Leipsic in 1824, three Samaritan poems from MSS in the British Museum and the public library of Saxe-Gotha. The sketch of Samaritan doctrine elicited from these, I shall give in his own words.

“ Primum Deum unicum esse docent sine socio et consorte—ab humana imbecillitate, humanique corporis similitudine, immunem—partim ratione et ex operibus suis, partim e libro divinitus patefacto cognoscendum—qui totum mundum impleat—cæterum, naturæ a mortalibus non indagandæ—cujus virtutes ante mundum conditum in eo quasi delituerunt, in mundo condendo demum se exseruerunt—Mundum, cujus duas partes esse ponunt, alteram sensibus patentem, alteram spirituales, angelorumque sedem—Hominem, e pulvere montis Safræ ad imaginem angelorum, non Dei, creatum esse volunt—semel *microcosmum* nuncupant—Angeli qui creaturis opponuntur, potestates mundi occultæ et copiæ divinæ appellantur, quæ semel duntaxat in legislatione in hunc mundum prodierunt—Prorsus repudiatis prophetis sequioribus, qui mendacii disertis verbis insimulantur—Moses omnium temporum propheta, decus prophetiæ, revelationis terminus, Dei amicus et servus familiaris, mundi vortex, sol, corona, salutatur, post ascensum in cœlum in splendore Dei habitaturus—cui prophetia jam in ipsa creatione destinata sit—Legem vero in ipso Hexaëmen creatam, omnium creaturarum principem, vestis divinæ scintillam, mundi cœlestis micam esse

volunt<sup>c</sup>—ejusque latæ historiam biblicam mythis imaginibusque poeticis exornant—assidua ejus lectione et accurata observatione homines vitæ æternæ participes fieri statuunt. Ut Sabbathi festum pie celebrent, pios Dei cultores etiam atque etiam admonent, idque religiose colentibus eximia quæque præmia spondent—In fine rerum instare volunt magnum Judicii diem, remissionem peccatorum, et piorum resurrectionem; pios resurrecturos esse, falsos autem prophetas cum cultoribus a resurrectione exclusum iri et igne combustum—De Messia in uno loco eoque dubio agitur.”

Respecting the argument founded on these poems, if, as Gesenius supposes, they were written at so late a period as the age of Justinian, or, (as is more likely,) of the Arabian conquerors, they are scarcely a less doubtful guide to the tenets of the Samaritans in our Saviour’s day, than the accounts of the Jews, however prejudiced. They bear evident marks of Gnosticism, which probably continued more and more to corrupt the Samaritan faith from the time of Simon Magus. Thus in the above abstract, we find the Deity described as a subtle nature, filling or pervading all the world; and to the *creatures* of God are opposed certain Beings who are called the *powers* of God<sup>d</sup>. In

<sup>c</sup> These images are probably an allusion to “the glory of the Lord,” or the symbol of holy light, which denoted his presence.

<sup>d</sup> *Δυναμῆς*, or Æons, such as Simon Magus, (who probably first taught this “vain philosophy” to his countrymen,) pretended to

their view of a day of judgment—remission of sins—and resurrection unto life, we may perhaps recognize the adoption of the Christian doctrines, which doubtless influenced the theological views of many who were not converts to Christianity.

*Vol. I. page 129. [G.]*

There is a singular coincidence between the petitions of the Lord's Prayer, and the Temptation; and when we recollect that this is the only prayer which Christ has left with his Church, the coincidence may seem not unworthy of notice. *Prayer.* "Give us this day our daily bread."—*Temptation.* "Command these stones that they be made bread." "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word which proceedeth out of the mouth of God."

*Prayer.* "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil," (or the devil.)—*Temptation.* "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God."

*Prayer.* "Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever."—*Temptation.* "He sheweth him all the *kingdoms* of the world, and the *glory* of them, and saith unto him, All these

be, "giving out that himself was some great one: to whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, This man is *the great power of God.*" Acts viii. 9, 10.

things *will I give thee*, if thou wilt fall down and worship me."

The coincidence may after all be accidental ; but those who think otherwise, may observe, that one petition of the Lord's Prayer has no correspondent in the Temptation ; *Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us*. To complete the analogy then, it will be necessary to include in the Temptation that last trial of our Lord on the cross, when the Tempter returned after a season, and Christ's final triumph over him was marked by a prayer for the forgiveness of his murderers.

*Vol. I. page 130. [H.]*

These two uses of prophecy—*information* and *evidence*—should be carefully distinguished, because a very different character attaches to a prophecy, as it is applied to the one or the other. When the use of a prophecy is to convey anticipated views, which are requisite for those who cannot naturally foresee them, then the prediction requires to be miraculously supported ; that is, it requires that its particular application should be pointed out by a messenger divinely and miraculously accredited. Thus, the previous knowledge of a famine which was to take place in Judæa, was needful for the early Christian Churches there, and accordingly formed



the subject of a prophecy, whose proper use was *information*; and had this prophecy not been made by regularly accredited prophets, such as Agabus and his company, no one could have been expected to act on its authority. The event, when it came to pass, would have proved *then* indeed that he who foretold it was inspired; but before the event, no assurance of this sort belonged to the prophecy itself; it required to be authorized by an accredited servant of God.

On the other hand, when the use and intent of a prophecy is, *evidence*, then, its use begins only with its fulfilment; and that fulfilment is its credential. For instance, the fulfilment of our Lord's prophecy concerning the destruction of Jerusalem, became a miraculous evidence of the truth of his pretensions, as strong as any miracle could be, which he wrought during his abode on earth; but its use in this respect did not at all depend on its being recorded, preached, and applied, by persons divinely accredited. Provided the previous *existence* of such a prophecy, delivered by him, could have been clearly made out, and the registrar were an uninspired person, still its character would not be at all affected by it. A fulfilled prophecy carries with it its own credentials. Nay more; considered as *evidence*, it would have its character destroyed, by supposing it to be otherwise circumstanced.

This will be very clear if we consider the ques-

tion, "In what way is a prophecy miraculous evidence? In what respect does it correspond to a testimonial miracle?" Is it not that prophecy is an appeal to the senses in proof of miraculous *knowledge* in the author, just as a sensible miracle is an appeal to the senses in proof of an exercise of miraculous *power* in the agent? Knowing that no human Being can raise the dead to life, he who should witness a dead man so raised, would have the evidence of his senses, that miraculous power must have done it. So too, one who has witnessed the destruction of the Jewish polity and the dispersion of the Jews, being quite sure that there were no human means of foreseeing these events, sees in that destruction and dispersion, a sensible evidence of the miraculous knowledge of him who foretold the events. But if he cannot of himself recognize the fulfilment of the words of Jesus in those events, the events are no more evidence to him, than the raising of the dead man would have been, if he had not seen that he *was* raised. He might indeed in the case of the raising of the dead, have been assured by another who did see it; but the evidence would be no longer the *original evidence of a sensible miracle*. And so too, he might give credence to one deserving of it, who should inform him that the destruction of Jerusalem was the fulfilment of certain words of our Lord; but if *he* could not recognize the fulfilment, the *event* would not be itself miraculous evidence. Whatever

purpose therefore the information might serve, it could not make the prophecy evidence. Its whole character as such—its whole correspondence to a sensible miracle—depends on the clear recognition by the ordinary human faculties of the complete connection between the prophecy and the event.

It is generally acknowledged, that the main purpose of the Old Testament prophecies concerning Christ was that of *evidence*. If some of them were made to serve another purpose also, yet to the Christian this is apparently the sole purpose. As information, they were useful to those to whom they were delivered ; but as evidence only, to us for whom they are fulfilled. But then, in order to be evidence on which Christ's identity with the promised Messiah is proved, their fulfilment in Christ must be left to be recognized *by our natural faculties*. Otherwise, the appeal to the prophecies as evidence would be idle. For their fulfilment, instead of being considered as proofs, must be considered as a matter to be proved. They thus become a dead weight in the evidence of Christianity, instead of one of the supports.

Has this been done ? That this is intended, seems to me to be the most natural way of accounting for the apparent misapplication of some of the Old Testament prophecies by the sacred writers ; which has been so often urged as an objection against their inspiration and infallibility. The

prophecies of the Old Testament have been preserved by divine Providence, as the means of perpetuating miraculous evidence, which each man gains for himself, and gains precisely in the way in which the contemporaries of Christ enjoyed the evidence of sensible miracles. Those miracles were not wrought too publicly, but on many occasions expressly concealed ; and no doubt often, like his preaching, given as a reward for previous docility. In like manner, the evidence to be elicited from the fulfilment of the Old-Testament-prophecies in Christ and Christianity, varies, and is apportioned to the docility and the humble research and pious meditation of each individual. The same Lord is still over us, who would not declare himself to all indiscriminately ; alleging as a reason, that those who were unworthy “ seeing, might see and not perceive, and hearing, might hear and not understand.”

In short, if the New Testament Scriptures had comprehended amongst its uses the *application* of prophecy, we should have believed its fulfilment on the evidence of the New Testament writers, and not, as was designed, believed in Christianity on the evidence of that fulfilment.

This principle seems to be what St. Peter intends, in his second Epistle, (chap. i. 20.) where he remarks, that “ no Scripture is of private interpretation.” The Greek is *ιδίας ἐπιλύσεως*, which is not literally rendered by “ private interpretation,” the term *ιδίας*

naturally implying something peculiar or proper to that of which the writer is speaking, and that is προφητεία γραφῆς.

The apostle had been reminding those to whom he was writing, that their faith rested not on philosophical fables, but on the evidence of eyewitnesses, who witnessed Christ and his miracles, and heard the voice that declared him to be the beloved Son of God. He then adds, καὶ ἔχομεν βεβαιότερον τὸν προφητικὸν λόγον, ὃ καλῶς ποιεῖτε προσέχοντες, ὡς λύχνω φαίνονται ἐν αὐχμηρῷ τόπῳ, ἕως οὗ ἡμέρα διαυγάσῃ, καὶ φωσφόρος ἀνατείλῃ ἀνταῖς καρδίαις ὑμῶν· τοῦτο πρῶτον γινώσκοντες, ὅτι πᾶσα προφητεία γραφῆς, ἰδίας ἐπιλύσεως οὐ γίνεται, οὐ γὰρ θελήματι ἀνθρώπων ἠνέχθη ποτὲ προφητεία, ἀλλ' ὑπὸ πνεύματος ἁγίου φερόμενοι ἐλάλησαν οἱ ἅγιοι Θεοῦ ἄνθρωποι. Now by the expression ἔχομεν βεβαιότερον, &c. it is clear, as Wetstein observes on the passage\*, that the apostle cannot mean to call prophecy a more certain evidence than the sensible manifestations which he had been before mentioning: but that the construction is ἔχομεν τὸν προφητικὸν λόγον βεβαιότερον. We (in opposition to former ages) possess the prophecies, rendered more sure evidence; converted by their fulfilment into grounds of belief corresponding to the manifestations and miracles before mentioned. This is the old interpretation put on the passage, (see Wetstein as above referred to; who cites likewise a passage, Josephus, b. iii. c. 5. where the word βεβαιότερος is

\* Nov. Test. in loco.



used somewhat similarly.) We then possess prophecy, according to St. Peter, converted into sure evidence; and to this evidence he bids us attend, bearing uppermost in our minds that circumstance, on which the character of prophecy as evidence depends, *viz.* its developement by the event: οὐκ ἰδιᾱς ἐπιλύσεως means, that it is not *its own interpreter*, but is unfolded and established by the event which is exterior to it. And this is so, he adds lastly, the prophet not being the author, but God, the sole controller of the event which is to interpret it. “God gave such predictions,” observes Sir Isaac Newton, “not to gratify men’s curiosity, by enabling them to foreknow things; but that after they were fulfilled, they might be interpreted by the event; and his own providence, not that of the interpreter, be then manifested to the world.” (Sir Isaac Newton on Daniel and the Apocalypse, 4to. p. 225.)

But then, it may be urged, do not the New Testament writers quote the prophecies, and point to their fulfilment? Unquestionably they do. All I mean to suggest is, that the *application* of the prophecies makes *no part of revelation*; and that to suppose that it does, destroys the character of the prophecies as evidence. But if the application of the prophecies makes no part of revelation, then, the subject falls under the head of those, on which every writer, inspired and uninspired alike, must be supposed to exercise his private judgment: grant

the truth of this, and we should no more expect a divine interposition to correct the scriptural writer, if on any occasion he was incorrect in quoting and applying a prophecy, than if his quotation had been made from an uninspired author, and merely used as an illustration of his meaning.

It may be added, that we can on no other principle account for the inspired writers not being corrected in the equivocal use of an expression, which could not fail to mislead. It has been asserted by reference to the Rabbinical writers, that the phrase “that it might be fulfilled,” and the like, was the customary form of *quotation* with the Jews, when no miraculous fulfilment was intended. Now it seems probable, if this be the case, that many of the quotations which are so introduced by the New Testament writers, are accordingly mere *accommodations*, and were not considered by the writers themselves as prophecies. The vague meaning of the word *prophet* may perhaps have made Christians in aftertimes less willing to take this view of it; because it might seem, that what was said to be written by a prophet, must be meant for a prophecy. But the term prophet included teacher, as well as *predicter*, and prophecy, teaching, as well as foretelling. If then we substitute the word *teacher* for *predicter*, we shall perhaps be better reconciled with the suggestion that assigns many of the quotations of prophecy to the class of illustrations. The Jews had no literature but their Bible, and would of

course use it for all purposes of literature. But still granting all this to be true, (which I really think it may be,) is it not certain that the sacred writers, if the application of prophecy were part of their inspired work, would not have left us in doubt, *when* they meant to point out a prophecy, and *when*, to quote by way of illustration. If the controlling influence of the Holy Spirit extended to this point, could the writers have been allowed to use the same expression in both cases, so as to leave us doubtful in every case?

Of course if this view of the application of prophecy be correct, the same reasoning will to a certain extent hold good with respect to the application of the *types* of the Old Testament. To a certain extent, because, like verbal prophecies, the types had other uses besides that of being convertible into evidence by their fulfilment. As verbal prophecy often furnished previous information, so types, or symbolical and histrionic prophecy, moulded the people who employed them to habits of mind, which rendered the truths typified more congenial and more intelligible than they otherwise would have been. This at least was the proper effect of them. But then, considered *as prophecies fulfilled*, the principle which applies to verbal prophecy, will of course apply here also.

Another scruple which may be felt in admitting this view is this; Are not the prophecies and types used by the inspired writers as grounds for doctrine?

and of course they must then at least be considered as infallible in their application. Supposing this granted, it would not affect the character of their quotations in any other case ; but even this I should hardly admit. The assertions, indeed, which the apostles maintain, if involving matter of faith or morals, must be held infallible ; else there is no rule of faith and conduct in Scripture : but it is no necessary adjunct, that all the means which they adopt to prove the assertion are likewise inspired means. They were assisted indeed in the knowledge and interpretation of prophecy ; but so they were in the gift of eloquence and of languages ; and yet it did not follow that their eloquence was therefore faultless, or their knowledge of a language always correct. These were aids given them, not resembling the endowments of one *possessed* by a spirit, but like the improvement of the natural faculties of men who remained still free agents, and still responsible, and therefore fallible beings.

The inspired teacher might plead feebly, or he might reason weakly ; for what God provided was *the point to be proved*, and the materials of proof, not the use of them. He might use prophecy or miracle amiss ; for it was the prophecy or miracle that God gave ; in the use of these instruments He only assisted them ; and surely no more was needed. As long as the attested record of the miracles remains, as long as those very prophecies are in

our hands, we are judges of the application of them, and it is intended that we should be so.

*Vol. I. page 316. [I.]*

Several conjectures have been offered by commentators on the real object of John Baptist's sending his disciples to Christ with so strange a question as, "Art thou He that should come, or look we for another." Some have ventured to attribute it to a temporary feeling of despondency and discontent in the Baptist, because that he, the Christ's forerunner, was left to pine in prison without any divine interposition; and they interpret the question, as if it were a hint or expostulation with Jesus. The view most commonly acquiesced in is, that the embassy was contrived for the satisfaction of John's disciples, and not of John himself; which however is liable to the obvious question, How came it then, that Christ should so expressly bid them "*go and tell John* what things you have heard and seen, &c." Hence others again have had recourse to critical niceties and refinements, such as, that John had seen the Spirit *descend* on Jesus, agreeably to the divine communication made to him, but did not know whether it *abode on* Him, which was likewise in the description divinely communicated; and that for his satisfaction in this latter particular it was,



the disciples were sent<sup>f</sup>. Mr. Benson, in his Hulsean Lectures, has revived the old interpretation given in the questions and answers, which are placed among the works of Justin Martyr, and supposes that the Baptist's object was to ascertain whether the person of whose miracles he heard so much, were the same with Him of whose Messiahship he had formerly received such undoubted proof, and to whom he had borne testimony<sup>g</sup>.

I will not pretend to decide certainly against any one of their conflicting views; only, I cannot but observe that they all proceed on one common principle, itself by no means unquestionable—that *John Baptist's faith could not have failed him*. He had, it is true, been entrusted with the office of proclaiming the Christ's coming; had received evidence that Jesus was He; and had publicly avowed his being satisfied with that evidence. But how many misgivings marked the course of the apostles themselves, after they had confessed Him? Not to mention the repeated instances to be found in their earlier intercourse with Him, on his apprehension they all forsook Him and fled. On the day of his promised return to them, they scrupled not to avow to a supposed stranger the disappointment of their trust, "that it was He who should have redeemed Israel;" and one refused to credit the

<sup>f</sup> See Sermons by the Rev. Henry Owen, Sermon vii.

<sup>g</sup> Hulsean Lectures for 1810, Lect. iii.

resurrection on any evidence, ever so strong, except the evidence of his own senses ; declaring, that he must first “ handle Him with his hands,” as well as see Him and hear his voice. And yet, his apostles were always with Him, and the impression of miraculous evidence was in their case continually renewed. John Baptist had not this advantage ; and yet like them he was probably subject to the same weak scruples and misgivings, when he perceived that the course which the ministry of Jesus was taking, was so greatly at variance with that which the learned and the nation at large, which himself doubtless, had looked for in the Messiah, and regarded as part of the evidence in support of his pretensions. “ If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself hence,” expressed a feeling not merely assumed by the tempter, but really owned by all whom he influenced ; nor only by the Jews who rejected the Son of God for wanting the ensigns of temporal power, but by those even whom faith, notwithstanding this scruple, forbade them to reject him. John, it is true, had miraculous assurance that Jesus was the Christ, and had submitted his mind to the influence of this evidence : but what then ? were not even the apostles so circumstanced ; not to mention the many who are recorded as having “ gone back and walked no more” with Jesus, after having become his disciples in consequence of what they heard and saw ?

It is an important truth, that the strongest possible

moral evidence, requires perpetually either to be *followed up*, or to be *renewed and refreshed in some way*, in order to be perpetually influential on human conduct. In abstract reasoning, we may prove a proposition once for all, and rest for ever after content, and on every occasion be ready to employ it with the same liveliness of conviction that it is true. Time does not necessarily impair the impression. It is put up in the mind for ever, like an imperishable document, to which we may refer with the same facility to-day and twenty years hence. But practical truths, i. e. considered *as practical*, require to be proved over and over, or they cease to be practical. Nay, although our course of behaviour may continue in the same direction which was given it by the impulse of truth, yet unless that truth be proved over and over, it will be found that our course of behaviour, although it should remain the same, is after a time not the result of the same principle, but of *custom*. And herein lies the great difference between those two courses of conduct which are distinguished by a great heathen moralist as proceeding the one δι' εθος and the other δι' ηθος. Virtuous and religious habits are *customs*, but not mere custom; differing from these latter by the original principle (which caused the custom) never being lost sight of. For a Christian to act always from Christian motives, it is quite requisite, that he should again and again renew those views of truth which caused the practical impressions on which he

is acting. In the case of our Lord's immediate followers, this was effected by the repeated display of miracles ; and if John needed this revival of the influence of evidence as well as others, (and why should he not ?) his absence and imprisonment will readily account for doubts and misgivings such as would prompt an embassy to Jesus. I do not say that such doubts and misgivings were unavoidable ; for he might have renewed the evidence once given him, by reflecting on all its bearings ; but they were at least as natural and excusable as the doubts and misgivings of the apostles ; and were accordingly, like theirs, most promptly relieved by the Saviour. In prison,—his end, apparently, as it was really, approaching,—harassed by the natural misgivings of human infirmity, increased possibly by the desponding and discontented suggestions of his own followers, he might have sent this message to Christ, before his last farewell charge to them ; in order, that, with the best possible evidence before him, he might satisfy himself and them. Nothing could be more appropriate to this object than the Saviour's display of miracles which formed a ready exposition of the prophecies of Isaiah ; and which thereby placed in the hands of the last and most honoured of Israel's prophets, an easy and satisfactory reply to his own doubts, as well as to the doubts of his disciples.

*Vol. II. page 15. [K.]*THE PRETENDED CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN OUR  
SAVIOUR AND THE KING OF EDESSA.

(Archbishop Wake's translation.)

*The Epistle of Abgarus to our blessed Saviour.*

Abgarus, prince of Edessa, to Jesus the good Saviour, who has appeared in the country about Jerusalem. Health. I have received an account of thee, and thy cures; how, without any medicines, or herbs, they are done by thee. For report says, that thou makest the blind to see, the lame to walk; thou cleanseest the lepers, and castest out unclean spirits and devils; and healest those who have laboured under long diseases; and raisest up the dead. And, having heard all this concerning thee, I have concluded with myself, one of these two things; either that thou art God, and that, being come down from heaven, thou doest all these mighty works, or that thou art the Son of God, seeing thou art able to perform these things. Wherefore, by this present letter, I entreat thee to come unto me, and to cure me of the infirmity that lies upon me. For I have also heard that the Jews murmur against thee, and seek to do thee mischief. For I have a small but fair city, which may be sufficient both for thee and me.



*The answer of our Saviour to Abgarus.*

Abgarus, thou art blessed, in that though thou hast not seen me, thou hast yet believed in me. For it is written concerning me, that those who have seen me should not believe in me; that so they who have not seen me, might believe and live. As for what thou hast written unto me, that I should come to thee; it is necessary that all those things for which I was sent, should be fulfilled by me in this place: and that having fulfilled them, I should be received up to him that sent me. When therefore I shall be received into heaven, I will send unto thee some one of my disciples, who shall both heal thy distemper, and give life to thee, and to those that are with thee.

*Vol. II. page 19. [L.]*

Certainly if there be any remains of Barnabas's genuine composition in the Epistle which bears his name, nothing can be more unlike it in style and in matter than the Epistle to the Hebrews. The doctrine of the two Epistles is indeed directly at variance; for the Epistle of Barnabas represents the whole ceremonial of the Jewish law as having no meaning but a cabbalistic one; the Epistle to the Hebrews, on the contrary, acknowledges the original import of the law, and points to no secondary meaning in any of its observances, which

is not fulfilled in the Christian scheme. Compare, for instance, the eighth, ninth, and tenth chapters of the scriptural Epistle, with these extracts from the apocryphal work.

“ *Neither shalt thou eat the eagle, nor the hawk, nor the kite, nor the crow*: that is, thou shalt not keep company with such kind of men as know not how, by their labour and sweat, to get themselves food; but injuriously ravish away the things of others, and watch how to lay snares for them; when at the same time they appear to live in perfect innocence.”

“ *Neither shalt thou eat of the hare*. To what end? To signify this to us: Thou shalt not be an adulterer, nor liken thyself to such persons.”

The same observation applies to the use made of the historical facts and events of the Old Testament, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, and in that commonly called Barnabas's. That many of these facts and events, *besides* their obvious character and import, were also designed by Providence to present a coincidence with facts and events in the Gospel scheme, there is no denying, without questioning the authority of Christ himself. He is recorded to have declared Jonas's fate, a type of his burial and resurrection,—the brasen serpent in the wilderness, a type of his atoning death,—the temple of Jerusalem, an emblem of his body. In St. Paul's undisputed writings, the same tenor of interpretation occurs perpetually. So also in the Epistle

to the Hebrews, a designed correspondence is asserted between various facts and events in the old history of God's Church, and certain facts and events in the history of the Christian Church. But then, *this coincidence is never made out to be the only or the primary import of the Old Testament record*; whereas, what is the doctrine of the Epistle of Barnabas? "*And God made in six days the works of his hands, and finished them on the seventh; and he rested the seventh day, and sanctified it.* Consider, my children, what this signifies. The meaning of it is this—that in six thousand years the Lord God will bring all things to an end."

"And he rested the *seventh* day. He meaneth this, that when his Son shall come and abolish the season of the wicked one, and judge the ungodly, and shall change the sun, and the moon, and the stars, then he shall gloriously rest in that seventh day." All this is not, as in the Epistle to the Hebrews, a statement of certain designed coincidences between the facts and events of the old and new Church histories; but a conversion of the Old Testament history into a mere allegory<sup>g</sup>.

<sup>g</sup> In the genuine Scriptures no allegory is to be found, except where it is avowed, as in parables; there is nothing professing to be history or precept, of which we are at all authorized to doubt the literal truth; although *it may have a typical signification besides*. The expression of our translators, "which things are an allegory," (it should have been, "which things have an allegorical signification," *ἐστὶν ἀλληγορούμενα*) has perhaps contributed to keep this principle out of sight. When

And this distinction deserves the greater notice, because (independently of other internal marks) it proves the impossibility of the Epistle of Barnabas being inspired; while it leaves that to the Hebrews free from all internal evidence against it. Indeed, no alleged proofs of inspiration would be sufficient to authorize an attempt like that of the author of the Epistle of Barnabas, to convert the scriptural record of real events into mere allegory. And for this reason, the scriptural record, *as a record of facts*, has been itself miraculously attested; and to suppose an Epistle like Barnabas's likewise supported by miraculous proofs of inspiration, would be to suppose a contradiction in the revelation and evidence of God. Such an author should be rejected, on the principle recognized in God's command to the Jews, to stone the prophet who should enjoin idolatry, whatever miracles he might work<sup>b</sup>; and again in St. Paul's exhortation to those whose faith he had once established on the undoubted testimony of divine sanction, that though himself—though an angel from heaven—were to preach another doctrine, he was not to be believed<sup>i</sup>.

No such evidence is indeed now-a-days con-

St. Paul compares Hagar to the Jewish Church, and to Mount Sinai, he does not mean to deny the actual existence of her, of Sarah, Ishmael, and Isaac.

<sup>b</sup> Deuteronomy xiii.

<sup>i</sup> Galatians i. 8.

tended for in the case of Barnabas's Epistle, and the internal evidence against it is probably admitted in its full weight by all who read it. The more needful caution perhaps is, not to confound its character with that of the Epistle to the Hebrews, and thereby to suppose the contents of the latter, like that of the former, to be incompatible with inspired authorship. They are not merely *dissimilar*, but in many points *directly opposed*.

With respect to the true authorship of the Epistle to the Hebrews, all the doubt that hangs over it, may I think be removed by a supposition by no means improbable. St. Paul was very unpopular with a large portion of the Christian world,—the Jewish converts. This Epistle bears internal evidence of being written principally for their use. What was more likely then than that St. Paul should employ some other person, say Luke, furnish him with the materials, and leave him to write in *his own name* to the Hebrew Christians. And this is precisely Origen's account of it, who states that the matter is Paul's, the composition and language another's.

If this be so, it would certainly follow, that although the pretended author would not, at first, reject his claim to it, yet as the cause of concealment diminished, according to time and place, he would lay aside his title to it, and leave Paul to be conjectured or known as the author. The very Church addressed in the Epistle, would



be the *last* probably to hear of the true authorship ; and the whole question would thus be for ever involved in obscurity.

Now what is the fact ? the style is not St. Paul's, and yet occasionally you meet with expressions, which unquestionably remind you of him, and are so peculiar as scarcely to leave a doubt that they are his. If he supplied the matter and corrected the Epistle, this is just what would have happened.

It has been attributed to Clement, to Luke, and to Barnabas ; and all these were at several times *companions* of Paul ; this again is likely.

It is said to have been addressed to the Hebrew Christians at Rome ; and it was at Rome that its genuineness as an Epistle of Paul was longest doubted. This is likewise what must have taken place<sup>k</sup>.

The notion that it was originally written in Hebrew probably arose from its being written *Hebraice*, not as to its language, but as to its mode of arguing, topics, and the like. For the internal marks of the Greek being the original, are very

<sup>k</sup> Many have supposed that it was written from Italy, on account of the expression, "*they of Italy* salute you;" but the Greek words at least (οἱ ἀπὸ τῆς Ἰταλίας) cannot signify persons *in* Italy, but imply, that they were *out of* Italy. They indicate more ; for it is the most natural way in which one writing to Italy would speak of the absent friends and fellow-countryman who were with him.

strong. See Wetstein, prefatory remarks on the Epistle in his Greek Testament.

*Vol. II. page 24. [M.]*

Whilst Christians of all denominations have ever agreed in admitting the *inspiration* of the New Testament; on no one point perhaps has there been a greater diversity of opinion than on the character of this inspiration. On this diversity of view, one general remark may be hazarded, and it will be found, I think, warranted by historical fact. In proportion as inspiration has been made to approach to a complete inditing of the Scriptures, the Scriptures have been neglected. The consequence of the study and application of the Bible, from the period of the Reformation, has been, gradually and progressively to limit the extent of inspiration; and by so doing to vindicate the holy character of what is unquestionably of divine origin, and to make the application of the rule of faith more sure.

It was only perhaps in the worst ages of superstition, that an entire inspiration of matter, words, and composition generally, like that asserted of the Koran, was universally contended for. At the period of the Reformation, Luther placed the first limit on this view, and contended that the matter only was of divine origin, the composition human.

Luther's view was adopted by Beza, Salmasius, and most of the cotemporary divines.

An accident however prevented it from being followed up, and even produced a re-action among the reformed. The Romanists caught at the concession, and argued for the necessity of an infallible expositor of a record confessedly composed by human and fallible authorship. Hence most of the divines of the latter end of the sixteenth and the beginning of the seventeenth centuries, abandoned even the advance of Luther's view, and maintained a plenary inspiration. Agreeably to the remark above made, the theology of the Germans where this point was most carefully maintained, was at that period in its worst state of relapse<sup>k</sup>.

And it is curious to observe how long the sophistical retort of the Romanists continued to operate in checking a revival of the first reformer's tenet. Mosheim, in his lectures on Dogmatic Theology, stirs the subject, with confessed apprehension about a similar result. "*Hæc dissensio inter nos, et inter homines ab ecclesia evangelica alienos, maximi est ponderis atque momenti; neque facile concedi potest hominibus extra ecclesiam nostram constitutis, materiam tantum Sacræ Scripturæ inspiratam esse. Ex hac enim propositione, nude intellecta, consecutiones possunt derivari, periculosæ, et divinæ veritati noxiæ. Eadem vero*

<sup>k</sup> See Pusey on the Theology of Germany.

lis et controversia, si agitetur inter nostræ Ecclesiæ theologos, non magnum habent momentum. Nam ecclesiæ nostræ theologi ita sententiam explicant, ut divinæ auctoritati Sacræ Scripturæ nihil derogetur.” *Elementa Theologiæ Dogmaticæ, De Princip. Theolog. c. ii. sect. 7.*

With the gradual progress of inquiry however, and the more diligent use of Scripture, a further limitation came in time to be put on Scriptural inspiration. It became a question whether even all the *matter* of the Bible was to be considered as having the stamp of divine truth on it. The progress of natural philosophy made it impossible that any thing but blind superstition, should assert this character for all physical facts; and the whole branch of topics which fall under that head, have been accordingly excluded by a great part of Christians. The contrary was indeed long maintained by the Romish Church, and is, even now, nominally, and for consistency sake. As Galileo was imprisoned for asserting the motion of the earth round the sun, so the Jesuits in their admirable edition of Newton’s works, were obliged to disavow their belief in the conclusions to which Newton’s reasoning led. Among the Protestants too, the inspiration of all the *matter* of the Bible has not been without its advocates.

But one portion of the matter of the Bible—its natural philosophy—having been once excluded from the sphere of inspiration, in the view of so

many learned and pious Christians, further doubts, on similar grounds, have been suggested respecting the statement of those historical facts which belong not to sacred but to profane history. It has been justly contended that similar difficulties are obviated by excluding profane history, as by excluding natural philosophy; and that there is no more ground for maintaining the inspiration of the sacred writers in the one than in the other case. This view can scarcely yet be said to be generally established; only perhaps because it less frequently provokes the question, than the case of physical facts.

It would lead to much more discussion than is compatible with a mere note, to enter into the general question of what further limitations may and ought to be put on the inspired character of Scripture. I will only briefly state, that the following may perhaps on reflection be found not inconsistent with the purest view of God's written word.

It may be fairly questioned then, first, whether even its *sacred history* is inspired. For although wherever a point of faith or practice is involved in the historical record, inspiration must be supposed, (else the application of the record as an infallible rule must be abandoned,) yet, where this is not the case, there seems to be no necessity for supposing inspiration; and by not supposing

it, several difficulties in the attempt to harmonize the sacred historians are removed.

Again, proceeding still on the principle that the truths to be believed,—the material of faith, is the point to which the control or suggestions of inspiration must have been directed, and to which alone it is necessary for constituting the Bible the rule of faith, that it should be directed, *the reasoning* of the inspired writers may be considered safely as their own. I do not mean to impugn the reasoning of any one passage in the apostolical writings; but were any found open to it, the circumstance would not, according to this view, affect the inspired character and authority of the work. The *assertions*, not the *proofs*, are the proper objects of unqualified assent; and provided we believe implicitly all that is proposed by the sacred writers to be believed, it may be fairly questioned whether it be requisite to assent always to the method adopted by them to persuade. This has been already touched on in note H, page 321, where the application of the prophecies in the Old Testament by the writers of the New, was considered; and is the view adopted by Burnet in his *Exposition of the XXXIX Articles*. (Art. VI.) “When divine writers argue upon any point we are always bound to believe the conclusions that these reasonings end in, as parts of divine revelation; but we are not bound to be able to make out, or even assent to,



all the premises made use of by them ; unless it appears plainly that they affirm the premises as expressly as they do the conclusions proved by them." See also Paley's *Evidences*, vol. ii. part iii. chap. 2. where Burnet's words are quoted, and his view supported.

*Vol. II. page 24. [N.]*

Among the internal evidence in favour of this view should be noticed the absence of technical phraseology. For technical terms in theology are evidently the result of deductions from Scripture; and generally mark the view taken by one party of Christians in opposition to another. Thus the words "Trinity," "Person," and the like, have been introduced into the Church vocabulary for the purpose of denoting the orthodox conclusion from the various passages of holy writ out of which the doctrines so expressed are elicited. These terms are, in short, the natural and spontaneous symbola of every uninspired age, in which the interpretation of Scripture is a matter of reasoning and a question. But in the age of inspiration and infallibility, whenever doubts and difficulties arose, the more direct course was to appeal to the inspired and infallible authorities ; and thus there was no opportunity or time for the rise of a class of words which are, as it were, the gradual deposit and formation of contested views.

The exceptions too which do occur, in the lan-

guage of the Apostles' Creed in this respect, are very remarkable. They consist of the latter clauses, "The holy Catholic Church," and "The communion of Saints;" which will appear from the course of the inquiry, to have been additions made subsequently to the apostolic period. The latter I call an exception, because although the expression is found in the New Testament itself, and therefore not a phrase of the Church's after-devising, yet the *technical* and symbolical *application* of it is; and this indeed is the case with a very large portion of our Church vocabulary. The words have been taken from Scripture, (where they were used originally without reference to any particular heresy or question,) and made a badge of some particular tenet, to which the heresy or dispute has given a prominence. It is certainly allowable for any body of Christians, so to employ the Scriptures; and yet perhaps the wiser and more judicious method is the adoption of terms and phrases altogether new. It more clearly marks in the language of Christians the human deductions, as distinguished from the inspired declarations; and if it be said that the human deductions carry more authority when given by scriptural words already sanctified, it is for this reason partly that they are not so proper. We are assuming almost too much when we make Scripture serve not only as the source from which we argue, but as the very deducer of the conclusion. It savours somewhat of the pious frauds of

old, which induced some, good-intentioned Christians no doubt, to publish uninspired tracts under the sanction of an apostle's name. Certain it is that when the point is discussed, it adds much to the perplexity of the controversy. For the advocate of the doctrine expressed by the scriptural term almost unconsciously defends his position, not merely as if it were a fair conclusion from Scripture, but as if it were the very assertion of inspiration. On the other hand, his opponent is apt to suppose, that he has shewn his adversary's assertion to be false, because he has proved it to be not the assertion of Scripture in that very language. I need scarce mention the many instances which must readily occur to every one who remembers how much of this has taken place respecting "justification," "regeneration," "sanctification," and in short every established phrase of the Church which has been expressed in scriptural terms.

On the other hand, it is impossible to deny that objections lie against the coinage or adoption of terms and phrases not scriptural. In neither case indeed can the terms be considered fairly as more than arbitrary marks of the *Church's view* of some scriptural doctrines; but then, as some of these scriptural doctrines are and must always be expressed in scriptural phrase, the others may acquire by association an authority and character equal to the scriptural assertions themselves. Whether this

might be remedied, by a *change* from time to time, of the expressions which mark the orthodox views of the Church, or by any other means, is a question well worthy of consideration.

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